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DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME

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A big flight of northern ducks had come in during the night and everything looked favorable for a good shoot

Courtesy of Shiplers, Photographers, Salt Lake City

Come Duck Strongers

Illustrated from Phanes

The Knickerbocker Press

New York

1917

it and everything looked

Se City

Come Duck Shooting with Me

Ву

Herbert Gardner

Illustrated from Photographs

The Knickerbocker Press

New York

1917

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THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO ALL WHO ENJOY

DUCK SHOOTING

ESPECIALLY ALL MY GOOD FRIENDS AND FELLOW MEMBERS OF MANY

DUCK SHOOTING CLUBS, PAST AND PRESENT

11-3-61



PREFACE

THE preface in books is an ancient and honorable The preface originally was either an excuse or an explanation for the existence of the book. seems a shame to retire from the scene without leaving behind some sort of a memento of my fifty-six years of shooting experience. All kinds of American game. from tiny sandpipers to wild turkeys and from rabbits to buffalo, have fallen before my gun. Perhaps this delight in shooting will seem strange to many people but after all it was only a means to an end, the enjoyment of outdoors in wild places. Occasionally large bags of game are made and these are the ones that are talked and written about. But there is just as much real enjoyment remembering the many pleasant outings, on foot in the stubble field, or in the duck blind, where the returns were only half a dozen birds or even less.

This is the excuse. Now for the explanation.

Nearly all of the sayings of both Captain Bogardus and Abe Kleinman were taken verbatim from my notes written during the trip.

"My First Flintlock" is true to the last detail. It was my split-eared pony that won the race against the Indian.

The series of Bear River duck sketches recall just a small part of the fun I have had shooting ducks. Oftentimes there is a certain sameness in duck shooting that

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I have endeavored to palliate, at least in part, by inducing "Jimmy," who is twenty-three, to tell a few stories from his point of view. Any club member will tell you that the photographs of the Bear River shooting scenes are the real thing. A sincere appreciation is due to the club members and guides who posed, all unknowingly, for these snap shots, as well as to other friends who sent in used or unused illustrations.

Quail shooting sketches are innumerable and it's difficult to leave the beaten path. In this one we cross the fence together and do our shooting among the trees and brambles in the good old-fashioned way.

"Shooting the Salt Water Coot" will bring back pleasant remembrances to many old friends. Most people read a book first, and if they like it, turn back and read the preface. It will be a great compliment should they do this to mine.

H.G.

COLORADO SPRINGS, 1917.

CONTENTS

			PAGE
SHOOTING DUCKS WITH CAPTAIN BOO	ARDU	S ANI	D
Abe Kleinman	•	•	. І
My First Flintlock	•		. 16
GREEN FROGS AND A BOTTLE OF BEER.	Bea	r Rive	:r
Series			. 27
THE VICISSITUDES OF SINK-BOX SHOO	TING.	Bea	17
River Series			. 44
A Few Ducks and Jimmy's Trip to	Calif	ORNIA	۱.
Bear River Series			. 63
THE NORTH SHORE. Bear River Series			. 74
John's Island. Bear River Series.	•	•	. 88
THE MUD QUEEN. Bear River Series	•	•	. 104
THE LOST JOKE. Bear River Series		•	. 124
"ABOUT A BUSHEL." A QUAIL STORY.		•	. 134
SHOOTING THE SALT-WATER COOT	•	•	. 149
GATHERING BIRDS' EGGS. IN FLORIDA			. 158

ILLUSTRATIONS

				•	PACING PAGE
"EVERYTHING LOOKED FAVORAGE SHOOT"		OR	A Go Fronti		e
"Pushing" for Ducks .				•	6
THE BUFFALO HERD				•	18
THE SAIL DOWN BEAR RIVER			•		28
THE CLUB LAUNCH WAITING AT	Cori	NNE		•	32
THE BLIND ON SINGLE POINT				•	32
THE HOME OF THE BEAR RIVER	Duci	c C	LUB		38
"Ours was the First Boat d Morning"	own	Rı	VER T	HAT	44
"THE BIG FLOCK OF CANVASBACE AND SHY"	KS WA	S B	отн W •	ILD	76
Two Limits of Teal		•	•		100
THE DUCKVILLE DUCK CLUB					100
ORDINARY HUNTING SKIFF .		•	•		104
An Aëroplane Boat					104
THE MUD QUEEN		•	•		104
OUR NORTHERN FLIGHT VISITORS	·		•		108
THE HAYSTACK BLIND ON PINTAIL ix	. Nec	K	•	•	126

ILLUSTRATIONS

x	ILLUS	TRAT	ION	S			
A BOAT BLIND IN	тне Сі	ENTER	OF '	rne L	AKE		FACING PAGE 126
JIMMY IN THE SINI	k Box						126
BETTY POINTING A	Bevy				•		140
TED ON A BEVY P	OINT		•	•	•	•	140
PRINCE WHIRLING	INTO A	Poin	т.		•		140
Cocoa Palms .					•		158
COCOA AND DATE	Palms	•	•		•	•	158
ROYAL PALM .	•	•	•	•	•		158
CABBAGE PALMS .		_			_		158

Come Duck Shooting with Me

"Come Duck Shooting With Me"

SHOOTING DUCKS WITH CAPTAIN BOGARDUS AND ABE KLEINMAN

"If a man could be born when he's old And gradually grow young, The wisdom he'd gain and the lore he'd attain Are not easily said or sung."

SAM WALTER FOSS.

"YES, there's excellent duck shooting within an hour's ride from town."

"Do you mean to say there's really good shooting as close as that to Chicago?" I asked.

"Why, yes," said the gun store man. "The shooting is good, of course, not as fine as it was a few years back, but it's still good. Where do you hail from?" he added.

"From New England," I replied.

"Did you ever shoot ducks outside of New England?"

"No," I said, "I never did."

"Well," said the gun store man, "you're going to have the greatest duck shooting experience of your life. No one can say how many ducks you will shoot, but if it's a little windy you will get a hundred shots a day."

A hundred shots a day! and in my Eastern black duck experience, if a couple were bagged between sunset and dark, it was something to brag about the rest of the

"COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

2

season. I wondered if the gun store man was stringing me. It seemed odd to hear of such shooting so near town. For even then, two years before the big fire, Chicago was a large city, big enough it seemed to me to round up all the ducks within an hour's ride in the cars.

Leaving the train at Gibson, it was only a short drive to "Jake's Place." The house and landing were on the banks of the Calumet River. It was long after dark when I arrived and the duck hunters were paddling home from their day's shoot. I walked down to the landing to watch them come in. The single shooter in each skiff tossed out on the little wharf from seventy to ninety ducks. Such shooting was astonishing. I pinched myself to see if I was really awake.

Soon afterwards the bell rang, dinner was announced, and after introductions I sat at dinner with Captain Bogardus, the Champion Pigeon Shot of the World, Abe Kleinman, Kleinman's brother, and three other well-known market shooters. The fame of these men was abroad in the land among the shooting fraternity. To me they were heroes. Imagine a Western delegate to a National Convention dining with the President of the United States and his cabinet and you can appreciate my feelings. My reception at first was a bit chilly. Market shooters had no particular love for amateurs. They were a nuisance to have round. But after dinner, when I brought out a bottle of "Old Jordan" and some cigars, the ice thawed considerably.

Captain Bogardus finally agreed to take me out next day. A stranger alone could easily get lost in the marsh and besides would not know the proper shortcuts among the cane brakes bordering the river, nor where to go for the best shooting. The constant overflow made a wide marsh, full of wild rice, on both sides of the river. I was to give three dollars a day and all the ducks I killed. Bogardus agreed not to take his gun, but promised not only to show me game but to give me pointers how to shoot it.

We were up at four next morning. In fifteen minutes each market shooter had his ducks tagged and packed in barrels. In two hours they would be on sale in Chicago. As we were paddling up the river half an hour later, I said to Bogardus, "How do you like market shooting? I should think it would be great fun." "Shooting is fun," he replied, "but market shooting, while it is partly fun as you say, is after all work, and good hard work too. I am taking you out largely as a little rest. My shoulder is as sore as a boil."

"What is your daily program in market shooting?" I asked.

"A market shooter don't have a great deal of spare time on his hands," replied Bogardus. "The season is short and there are seven days in the week for us. Up at four every morning. Pack and ship ducks killed the day before. Shooting so close to town, with an hour express service, we are not obliged to ice our birds and that's a great saving. I average clear above expenses, six dollars a day. Then a hot breakfast and off for the day's shoot while it's still dark, just as we did this morning. Shoot all day. Sometimes I dislike to kill so many ducks, but it's all in the day's work. Market shooters have to live."

"Do you all know beforehand just where each man will locate for the day's shoot?" I asked.

"Yes," answered Bogardus. "We arrange in a general way the location where each man will shoot during the day so as not to interfere with each other. A man can shoot in the same place day after day if he wants to.

"COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

Our idea is to scatter out as much as possible and keep the ducks moving. The shooting is pretty fair all over."

"It's mostly morning and evening shooting, isn't it?"

"That's it on calm, still days, but you get shooting all day when the wind blows."

"What do you do on calm days?" I asked.

"If there is little wind and the sun is warm, there is not much shooting towards noon and we often get a couple of hours' snooze in the middle of the day. When it gets too dark to shoot, we pick up and go home."

"I suppose you're pretty tired after supper and glad to get to bed."

"It would make our work mighty easy if that was possible, but our real work begins when we get in at night," answered Bogardus.

"What do you call real work after rowing round and shooting all day?"

"The shooting part is all right, there's some excitement about it, but when we get back from the day's shooting, tired and wet, an hour or more after dark, there's lots to do. Clean, tie together, and hang up the ducks we fetched in, to cool. Wash up, put on dry clothes, have dinner, and then spend the evening reloading these confounded shells."

"You don't like reloading shells?" I said.

"You're dead right," replied Bogardus. "I hate it, but market shooters cannot afford to buy loaded paper shells and throw them away after shooting. It's a big saving for us to shoot brass shells. My load is five drams of powder and one and one half ounces of number six shot. I always start out each morning with three hundred loaded shells in my shell box."

"And you reload your shells in the evening after your day's shooting is over?"

"That's it exactly. I reload all the way from a hundred to two hundred and fifty shells, as many shells as I shot during the day, so as to have my shell box full next morning. Then I tumble into bed somewhere between eleven and one, to turn out at four next morning, rain or shine, cold or warm. It's a tough life perhaps, but I like it."

There was a touch of gray in the east. We could hear the swish of wings overhead as the ducks began to come in from their night's feed in neighboring grain fields. "They're moving good and early this morning," remarked Bogardus. "Guess we will put out the decoys at the Big Bend and shoot there a while."

Bogardus watched with great interest while I took my seven-pound breech loader, made by Tonks of Boston, from its case. Picking it up he exclaimed, "It feels like a feather! What does it weigh?" I told him. "What charge do you shoot in this popgun?" "Three drams and one ounce of shot," I answered.

"Well," grinned Bogardus, "if I was a duck and you shot such a charge as that at me, I'd come down, take the gun away from you, and beat you over the head with it."

"You don't seem to like my double barrel," I said. "What kind of a shotgun is your favorite?"

"One of those new ten-pound, ten-gauge breech loading Lefever guns is good enough for me," he answered promptly. "They don't get out of order and stand the racket in good shape. Some market gunners prefer Greeners; they are fine guns but the first cost sets you back a bunch of money out of your duck sales. Yes," Bogardus continued, "Lefever guns are all right. With two shells in the gun and holding two shells in the fingers of my right hand, I can get in four shots at a

flock." The gun he mentioned was the old style Lefever, the kind that opened by pushing up a lever hanging in front of the trigger guard.

We had a bully shoot that morning. It was a day I shall always remember. The twenty-eight mallard decoys made a nice showing in the bend of the river and our blind was hidden on the point of the bend where Bogardus said, "We'll get 'em both coming and going." The skiff, hidden in the reeds, was used to pick up the fallen ducks before they drifted away. It was exciting to see so many ducks. It was like the duck stories I had read and hardly believed possible, but we did not pick up many ducks to start with. I was in such a quiver of nerves that I missed my first three shots.

"A little tangled up, ain't you?" asked Bogardus.

"I should say so," I replied. "You're right about the gun and these old shells don't seem of much account either."

"Don't get sore," grinned Bogardus. "I'd miss a dozen shots if I could feel a little of your enthusiasm. The gun and shells are all right but possibly something might be said about the pointing of the gun."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, you know I sat right behind you, and every time you shot you aimed straight at the duck. Remember a flying duck don't stay long in the same place. You must aim a little ahead of them and shoot in the air where they ain't."

Turning round I saw a big mallard coming towards the decoys, promising a cross shot at not over thirty-five yards. Bogardus saw him too and whispered, "Here comes one; take it easy, aim straight at the duck, then throw your aim eighteen inches ahead of his bill and shoot quick." The mallard flew by, offering an



"Captain Bogardus said I would like 'pushing,' and I did. The mallards or teal would rise ahead of us, from pond holes in the overflowed marsh or hidden narrow channels through the reeds as our boat approached, and start hurriedly away in a straight but rapidly rising flight. It was not unlike the inanimate target shooting of to-day "Courtesy of Shiplers, Salt Lake City

easy cross shot; I did exactly as Bogardus said, and as the gun cracked, down came the duck. I felt a hundred per cent. better.

The birds, mostly incomers and side shots, were fairly close, much more so than they are nowadays. I missed a couple of incomers, and Bogardus said, "An overhead incomer is an easy shot, but if you shoot directly at the duck, he flies ahead and the shot passes behind him. You must aim at the duck, then raise the barrels upward a little until the duck is hidden and then shoot quick." After a try or two I got the idea and had no more trouble with "incomers" afterwards.

Bogardus was a wonder in marking down ducks that fell in the tall reeds and almost invariably found them. This added greatly to my bag as I never would have retrieved half of them. All reeds looked alike to me. My score during the morning flight was twenty-one; Bogardus could easily have killed twice as many.

"Pushing" for ducks is great fun for the shooter, but perhaps not so much for the pusher. When the morning flight was over, Bogardus said he thought I would enjoy "pushing" and I did. I sat in the bow of the skiff, gun in hand, while Bogardus poled and pushed through the most likely places to find feeding or resting ducks. It was very pretty shooting. The mallards or teal would rise, splashing from the water, springing a dozen feet in the air, and then start off in a straight but rapidly rising flight. It was not unlike the inanimate target shooting of to-day. The front and left hand shots were the easiest. The right handers that turned and flew back behind the boat were more difficult.

I remember one cock mallard that rose badly frightened twenty yards away and after scattering the spray in every direction started off like a cannon ball. I gave him first the right and then the left barrel and made two perfectly good misses.

"Now throw the gun at him!" laughed Bogardus. "You might get him that way."

Bogardus pushed with hardly a stop except to pick up birds, for a couple of hours. He was a giant of a man, six feet two, and weighed over two hundred pounds of bone and muscle. He did not seem a bit tired when we stopped for lunch at noon. After lunch with cigars going we got talking about difficult shots and Bogardus said he thought flight shooting on single teal about the most difficult proposition he knew in duck shooting, whereupon I asked:

"Do you aim the same way you told me to when you shoot ducks?"

"Well, no, not exactly," he replied. "I am a pretty quick shot; as near as I can tell I aim ten inches to three feet in front of the duck's bill, according to the duck's speed and distance. I don't bring my gun to a standstill when I shoot as you do, but keep the gun barrels moving along with the duck when I fire. The way I taught you is the easiest for beginners. If you have a natural gift for shooting you will find it will come out with practice."

"There's another thing," I said, "that I am curious about."

"What is it?" Bogardus asked.

"Do you shoot with one or both eyes open?"

Bogardus laughed as he answered, "Hanged if I always know on ducks, sometimes one eye open and sometimes both, according to the position of the bird. In shooting pigeons I can safely say I always shoot with both eyes open."

As we were rowing towards the place selected for the

evening shoot, Bogardus said, "You've caught on to shooting ducks first rate for your first real day. You know now how to handle side shots and incomers and understand that you must always aim a little above all ducks when they are frightened or leaving the decoys, as they are then always rising in their flight as they fly from you. These three pointers are the three rudiments to be remembered in shooting ducks over decoys."

"How about flight shooting?" I asked.

"Flight shooting is different. The birds are flying high and much faster than in decoy shooting. Practice alone can teach you how to judge distance, rapidity of flight, and where to aim in flight shooting; you have to learn from experience. Shooting to my mind is a little like living. Overcoming obstacles makes the man. Missed shots make the incentive for shooting. There would be little excitement if you could kill every time you fired."

Four o'clock found us in a marsh of reeds mixed with grass and open muddy places. We shot from a low blind of reeds. The evening flight began late but it was something to dream about while it lasted. The ducks came in flocks, bunches, pairs, and singles. Bogardus made four doubles running with my gun and at last owned up that for a toy it shot fairly well, although as he said, "I miss the bumps my shoulder gets from those five drams of powder in my old ten gauge."

We had nearly seventy ducks that night and every market shooter thought Bogardus shot them. There was no game limit in those days and the man that killed the greatest number was the lion of the evening.

One night after dinner, Abe Kleinman, instead of starting reloading shells, sat down beside me by the stove. I had no birds to clean or shells to load and loved to smoke after, what was to me, a hard day's work. I gave Kleinman a cigar and he lighted up and sat quietly smoking. At last he asked:

"Did you have good luck to-day?"

"Yes," I said, "with my Eastern ideas I think a dozen game birds of any kind a good bag and to-day I shot forty-two ducks."

"A dozen birds a day is no shoot," said Kleinman, thoughtfully, "but a dozen ducks at one shot isn't bad."

He smoked a while longer and then suddenly said:

"How would you like to shoot with me to-morrow?"

"I'd like nothing better," I told him.

"All right," said Kleinman, "it's a wack."

Everybody was surprised at breakfast next morning when in response to a question I said I was to shoot with Abe, as Kleinman rarely took anyone out. He was generally the first away in the morning and the last in at night, a silent man in a crowd, but I found him not only pleasant but talkative.

As we walked down to the landing it looked like a storm; a few drops of rain were falling and a high wind was blowing the clouds in great driving masses.

"You better go back and get your rubber coat," said Kleinman.

"I have it with me," I said.

"All right, here's the skiff; it's a bit small. I had it built for one man and extra narrow to get through the reeds easily, but it will carry two at a pinch."

Kleinman rowed away, a quick active stroke for three miles without speaking, and then took his push pole and shoved the boat some little distance from the river through the marsh grass growing in the water until we came to a large pond hole. "There will be fine shooting here to-day," said Kleinman.

"It sounds like it," said I. It was still dark as a pocket and the wind was blowing hard but every now and then I could hear the whistle of wings going over.

"Here's the stand," said Kleinman. "I killed ninetysix ducks in it one day last week."

The stand was just a jumbled up pile of reeds, that had originally been stuck up in a small circle. Kleinman picked them over and soon had enough set up to make a new stand. They mingled with the growing reeds and tall marsh grass so well as to be hardly noticeable from a little distance.

There were two or three big flattened bundles of grass and reeds on the floor of the stand, enough to keep the legs of my canvas stool from sinking too deeply in the mud. Eighteen decoys were put out in the pond about twenty yards from the stand and then Kleinman said, "Well! You're all set. I'm going to shoot about half a mile farther up the river, but I'll be down about noon and we'll lunch and have a smoke together," and off he went.

The weather made the ducks uneasy; they were constantly alighting in the marsh and then rising seemingly in search of company. Eternal vigilance means success in this kind of duck shooting. The birds were coming from all quarters. Not exactly decoying but coming within long gunshot of the decoys, apparently wondering why the decoys did not rise and fly about with them. I was watching three mallards coming straight in from the east when—Whish! Half a dozen teal, coming from behind, went over my head within twenty feet. It was really too impudent, I could not stand it. My gun was at my shoulder; at the shot the

teal jumped a dozen feet into the air and made sail in different directions. I thought surely I would get several but only one fell.

Four mallards a hundred yards out, seeing the decoys, veered in on a dip to perhaps forty-five yards, just to see what was the attraction in the pond for those eighteen decoys. Five feet ahead of the leader was surely far enough. Bang! went my gun and down came the duck behind the leader. My lead should have been eight feet ahead instead of five. Looking southerly I saw a flock of teal coming. I counted twenty teal in the bunch as they came on, but when they swung round and headed for the decoys, the air seemed chock full of teal and I knew I ought to get at least four or five. tried to remember all the rules laid down in the books for just such cases. Then I fired, aiming at the middle of the bunch. Again a single teal fell. As the rest of the flock jumped into the air I aimed two feet over the nearest and down he came. It was my first double of the day.

I fired seventy-five shells that morning and had thirty-one ducks piled up in a heap back of the stand. A wounded bird had to be retrieved quickly or it got into the tall reeds and was lost. I found a dozen without mishap. Perhaps this made me careless, for suddenly I stepped in a hole, lost my balance, and fell flat on my face in the mud and water. Both were soft.

The wind lulled about ten and the ducks quieted down, affording only an occasional shot. Along about noon I heard steps splashing in the water. It was Kleinman. During lunch he told me about his gun, another tenpound, ten-gauge fieldpiece. "Bogardus," he said, "shot a gun with a three and a quarter inch drop. I had been shooting a muzzle loader and stuck to it as long as I

possibly could, but when the boys with breech loaders began bringing three birds to my two I ordered a breech loader." Then suddenly he said, "Look east." A dozen mallards were coming. They came to the decoys in splendid style. As they came within shot I dropped one; the rest dodged in every direction and I was slow in getting in my second barrel; finally I fired and a duck fell. "Humph," said Kleinman, "they will fly into it sometimes." Kleinman walked out and came back with the duck.

"That was a long shot," he announced; "seventy-two steps; we market men rarely shoot at such a distance, can't afford to waste ammunition. You must have a chokebore gun."

"The left barrel is full choke, the right half choke," I said.

"I thought it must be from that shot," remarked Kleinman. "One barrel of my gun is open, the other half choke; later on in the season, when the ducks get wilder and the canvasbacks and redheads begin coming, I use my full choke pair of barrels; but as I was saying, I ordered my breech loader with a three and a quarter inch drop, like the gun Bogardus has. When it came it had a two and a half inch drop. I was as mad as a hornet."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Nothing, kept the gun. The longer I had it the more I liked it. You see I shoot pretty quick. I see the duck, note his direction and velocity of flight, and then shoot, calculating my shot and the duck will reach a certain spot together, as they generally do. I never see the sight on my new gun and I can shoot it quicker and like it better than my old one."

"I think you and Bogardus could shoot pretty

14

straight with any old gun," I said, and Kleinman smiled.

"Do you know what they call a good duck shot down in Chesapeake Bay?" I asked.

"Chesapeake Bay? that's where they shoot out of those 'coffin' boats isn't it?" said Kleinman.

"Yes, that's the style down there. They call a man a good duck shot in Chesapeake Bay who can lie on his back in his 'coffin' boat, with one gun in his hands and two other double-barreled guns beside him, and when a bunch of redheads come to his decoys can kill a duck with each of his six shots."

Kleinman laughed. "They say a whole lot sometimes about people and things that are a thousand miles away. I've heard of one chap down there who has done it a time or two, but I'll bet he can't do it as a steady thing."

"What do you call first-rate shooting on ducks?" I asked.

"Well," said Kleinman, "take 'em as they come and don't pick shots, and seventy-five ducks for a hundred shells is pretty good work. Of course, I could do much better than that if I picked easy shots."

"What makes all this racket I hear, this Kak! Kak! Kak! Kak! noise, every time a gun is fired? It's the funniest sound I ever heard on a marsh."

"It's these birds they call rail," answered Kleinman. "There are more of them on the marsh to-day than I ever saw before; they must have come in last night on their way south. They will stay around now until the first hard frost and then every last one will go south that night. Queer isn't it, how those little birds that hardly seem able to fly fifty feet here in the marsh can fly twelve hundred miles to escape cold weather?"

The wind went down that afternoon and the shooting was poor. The ducks were satisfied to stay quietly and feed. The evening flight that night, however, was a wonder. The ducks did not come in until almost dark. I shot a few but soon it became too dark to find them. The ducks came in thousands; several times they dropped down within ten feet of the stand. You could hear the splash all around in the water where they were alighting.

Suddenly the whole bunch of ducks got up with a roar of wings. I heard heavy footsteps splashing in the distance. Kleinman was coming with the boat. We put my ducks in and then walked to the river. There we both got in and Kleinman remarked, "This is a good big load, two of us and all these ducks, but if your hair is parted in the middle and you sit perfectly still, I will guarantee to get you home all right."

The present generation has forgotten both of these men. They were splendid types of market shooters. This in their day and generation was no sin. The supply of game was apparently inexhaustible and the demand for it came from the wealthiest people in the land. The sale of game in most States is now forbidden by law and the market shooter has followed the buffalo, but I shall always count it a privilege that I had the pleasure of knowing and shooting with such splendid shots and good fellows as Bogardus and Kleinman.

MY FIRST FLINTLOCK

NEARLY everybody has a hobby of some sort. Your business may not satisfy, but your hobby always fills the bill. There's a lot of satisfaction in a good healthy hobby. It may be collecting coins, postage stamps, or birds' eggs. Raising blooded horses or cattle, or even the humble hen. Possibly it's a scheme to aid your fellow-man, or to own a magazine to give free rein to your ideas of what grooves the world should run in. If you are wealthy and tabooed by society, a hobby for collecting mortgages on the homes of society leaders gives both personal satisfaction as well as good financial returns; something unusual in hobbies, as they are generally both costly and wasteful.

My hobby is firearms. Very few of us who have this hobby can pass a sporting goods store window without stopping to look in. All manner and fashions of guns and pistols, old or new, have a never failing fascination at all times and in all places.

My first firearm, a brass-barreled pistol, costing six bits, was purchased at the age of eleven. It was a far cry from this pistol to a fourteen-hundred-dollar shotgun, the finest made-to-order gun I could get. No such cost could possibly be put into plain gun. It was ornamented from stock to muzzle. Five hundred dollars' worth of gold was used in inlaid work, while the expense for a twelvementh of skilled labor was as much more. A running golden stag with branching antlers, pursued

by a brace of hounds, was wonderfully done. The stag was two inches long. There were thirty-four groups of game inlaid in gold, both at rest and in flight. The gun now occupies the leading place in an artist-sportsman's collection. It is a gem as a work of art, for I have reviewed and studied it again and again for many years after I had "let go" of it. Other guns I knew well and respected, but this one was my dearest possession and all I have left now is my memory of it.

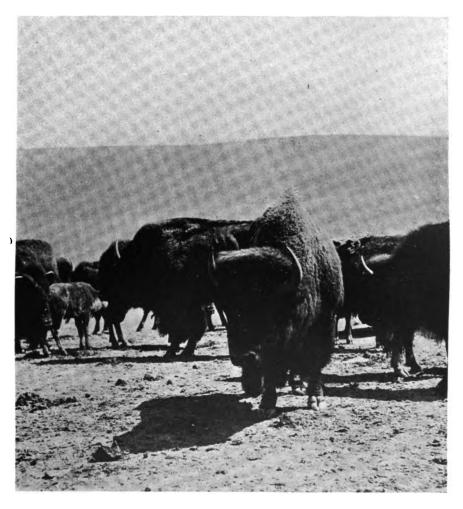
I recall vividly another gun: it was an old flintlock owned by one of my guides in Florida. He had never owned any other gun. His father died when he was fifteen and left it to him. The gun had a long thin stock with a receptacle in it for patches, had a set trigger, and weighed seven and a half pounds. The hammer held in its grip the reddest flint I ever saw. Originally a rifle, the rifling had long since worn smooth and the present load was a solid ball with a leather patch around it and three buckshot. It shot true up to fifty yards, but beyond that distance it was uncertain.

Modern guns make no such noise as "fizz-bang," but it exactly describes a flintlock. We were running bears, the ordinary black bears of the country, one day in Florida with half a dozen dogs. The bears finally took to water in a swamp and swam across to an island where both climbed the same tree. Being nearest the swamp I reached the pond first.

The water was the color of ink. I had killed three water moccasin snakes, that crawled out of the same pond, within half an hour and balked at entering the water. The guide ran up and holding his gun and powder horn over his head waded across although the water was up to his neck, and shot both bears. The "fizz-bang" of his gun was very much in evidence.

The next of my gun children was an old Hawkins flintlock rifle. The gun came into my possession in a curious manner. It was the last month of 1872. We were busy on the cattle ranch endeavoring to prevent our half-wild Texas long horns from straying into either Canada or Mexico, when news came that buffalo were plentiful on the eastern plains of Colorado. A party of five was made up for a buffalo hunt. I didn't own the Hawkins rifle yet. We found the first buffalo twenty miles east of Las Animas and fifteen miles north of the Arkansas River. The wagon stopped and everybody on horseback advanced until discovered and then charged the herd of about two hundred animals. big herds, visible as far as the eye could reach, were not in evidence in my time. I had traded a saddle, an old pistol, and ten bushels of potatoes some months before for the split-eared Indian pony I was riding. I knew he was a fast runner and a good cow pony, but that day he proved himself a trained buffalo hunter as well; carrying me alongside the buffalo, to the envy of many of my companions whose horses were fearful of the wildlooking, snorting brutes. My only arm was a big six shooter, an old style Colt's dragoon pistol—a cap affair that shot paper cartridges holding powder and ball. You broke the paper end and rammed the cartridge home with the rammer attached to the gun. It took some time to reload.

My luck, owing to my pony, was great. My first victim was a fine bull. Like all green hands I had picked the biggest buffalo in the bunch. It took three shots to down him. He had a splendid robe but the toughness of his flesh when we took the hide off was surprising. One shot did for a fine fat heifer. Then a three-year-old bull came out of the herd in my direc-



The buffalo herd on their native plains. The animal facing you "on guard" is a fine specimen of a buffalo bull

tion with his tail standing straight up. He was mad and looked it as he came towards us. My pony whirled as the buffalo charged and as it went by I presented it with the last two bullets in my pistol.

My pony, with sides heaving, was perfectly willing to stop while I reloaded, although his ears were cocked and his eyes watched the departing herd.

Buffalo run at a lumbering looking but really fast lope and these were out of sight in the rolling prairie before I could reload, although I could hear the shots and excited yells of my companions in the distance.

The chase was most thrilling, but when I rode back and looked at the three monsters I had killed, they were not especially attractive. It's no small job to dress and skin buffalo. Where large game is generally found, there are trees where carcasses of game can be hung up and dressed. On the plains this business was done on the ground, rolling the animal over, after the hide on one side was taken off. It was not a pretty job. The hide does not slip off like that of a deer. One man holds the hide tight and pulls on it, while another cuts the skin from the meat with a sharp knife.

The hindquarters of the heifer I had killed were brought in to supply the camp with meat. That night was cold, nearly zero. The buffalo meat froze solid. The cook, while the frozen meat lasted, used to call out: "Grub pile ready in fifteen minutes, if you want buffalo steaks go and git it." It was no easy job to "git it." The meat had to be sawed out in slabs. Well! perhaps we were young, but those buffalo steaks were certainly the best ever.

Buffalo are stupid. Shooting them on foot when hidden in an old buffalo wallow or behind sagebrush was about as sporting a proposition as resting a rifle on the fence and shooting cows in a field. Professional buffalo hunters always shot on foot. Then the animals fell inside a comparatively small area and it was easy for the wagon squad to find and skin them. A buffalo shot low down behind the fore shoulder is hit in the heart. He stands still a minute, then begins to sway sideways, and finally falls dead without noise or struggle. The balance of the herd show no alarm until an animal is badly wounded and begins struggling, then they become frightened and run.

The professional rarely chased buffalo on horseback as it strings the bodies widely apart over the plain and makes too much extra work for the skinners. It always seemed to me that the Government winked at the slaughter of the buffalo on account of the Indians. The animals provided them with home, food, and raiment; tents, robes, and meat. With plenty of buffalo on the plains, they could get supplies to continue the fight against the settlers. When the buffalo went, the Indian went also—upon a reservation.

A few days, hunting filled our wagon with meat. We saved the robes, hindquarters, tongues, and humps of the buffalo. They said the hump was a great delicacy much relished by old timers. It was a mixture of fat and meat. A buffalo round steak was much more appetizing. There is surprisingly little meat on a buffalo, considering his appearance and bulk while alive.

Our first night's camp on the homeward journey was planned to be on the banks of the Purgatoire River, or Picketwire as the cow punchers called it, that empties into the Arkansas River. The first discoverer of the river, a French trapper, found it full of quicksands and had much difficulty in crossing with his horses. He therefore named it Purgatoire. A cattle man would

have called it by a short word of four letters. The Frenchman was more polished.

Crossing the brow of the last roll in the prairie, before reaching the river, we discovered a band of Ute Indians encamped. We drove three hundred yards up the river, above them, and made camp for the night.

They were a hunting party, and had squaws along to dress the game. The warriors did no menial work. Being at war with the plains Indians, they did not dare to go far from the mountains, their native home. They had only killed a few antelope. The buffalo were all in the enemies' country. That evening the Indians, squaws and all, called on us. They sat on one side of the fire and we on the other. We gave the warriors tobacco and two cups of sugar to the squaws. No one said anything for some time, but the Indians' black eyes took in everybody and everything about the camp.

Finally one Indian said:

"You have heap game."

One of our men answered, "Not much, little."

Then the Indian said, "Your pony good?"

"No, pony no good, played out."

The Indian asked, "Ha! you run horse race?"

Our man would not take a dare from an Indian and replied.

"Yes, morning, run horse race."

After the Indians left the question was, "What horse shall we run?" Bill Fessenden had perhaps the fastest pony, but Bill had ridden him the entire trip and this work with only grass to eat had weakened him down considerably. Tom Foster had the best-conditioned pony in our bunch. All the horses but his were turned loose every night to graze, their front legs hobbled to

prevent wandering. Foster's pony was a known "back tracker," sure to make tracks back to the home ranch if he got loose. He was kept close to the wagon every night, picketed out by a long rope to get what grass he could, always in readiness to round up any of the loose horses, should they stray. Foster fed his pony corn night and morning. Well, we were in for a race and had to start something. Foster's pony seemed our one best bet.

We were arranging our blankets around the fire for the night when Sam Jacks started singing his customary evening song,

"Buffalo bull come down the mountain Long time ago."

Then both lines were repeated, the last three words forming the chorus. Sam told me it was the oldest song of the plainsman and trapper. He said he knew three hundred verses. The song first describes the doings of the buffalo bull, then the trapper who slays the buffalo recounts his exploits, and it finally ends by the trapper singing of his other adventures in both love and war. The manner of its verse can be easily changed according to the personal adventures of the singer. The song was evidently copied from the ones the Indians used to sing in their war dances, telling the story of their successes by both word and action.

Sam Jacks was a small, wiry, and perhaps the dirtiest man I ever knew. He was over sixty years old (this seemed a great age to me at that time), had been a scout and trapper on both plains and mountains for thirty years. He and his partner while trapping beaver in the mountains, some years before, had been ambushed and shot full of arrows by Indians. Both were scalped, left for dead, and everything they had carried away. Sam recovered sufficiently to crawl a couple of miles on hands and knees to a cache he had of food and as he said, "I had more health than anything else and so I got well." His partner was killed.

Of all his adventures he was proudest of getting scalped. The scalp came from the place on the head where a man first begins to grow bald. The showing of naked skull was roughly round and about three and a half inches in diameter. Like all old-time trappers he wore his hair long and the scar was nearly hidden. Sam told me he was conscious but never moved a muscle when the Indian ran his knife around his head and then yanked his scalp off. He also made the surprising statement that there was very little pain in being scalped. He always desired to find the Indian that scalped him, probably for no good purpose. Whenever Sam got full, he would weep and cry, "I want my scalp," just as a small boy does when a larger boy steals his candy.

Early next morning the Indians appeared on horse-back, dressed in their best beaded deerskins and with their faces painted. A horse race like a buffalo chase was an occasion in their monotonous lives. They look at it much as a boy regards a circus. After considerable of a powwow the match was made for a pony a side. Our pony and the Indian pony were tied, heads together, and left until after the race. Then the winner would take them. Our orders were as it was winter, "Don't bet your blankets but everything else goes." The Indians had a five-dollar bill and four silver Mexican dollars. They laid it on the ground. We had just enough cash to cover it. An Indian would place a

revolver on the ground, one of our men would cover it with his revolver. It was a bet. Nothing was said.

The boys bet saddles against Indian blankets and Foster bet his other pony. I had a Spencer carbine and noticed one of the Indians looking at it. His gun was in a buckskin case.

Finally touching my gun he said, "Bet?"

My opinion of the abilities of Foster's horse were not any too high, so I said, "Indian pony heap good."

The Indian looked me square in the face and said in English:

"Ugh! Injun pony dam poor."

"See gun," said I.

He took his gun out of his fringed buckskin case and it was the Hawkins flintlock. It looked odd to see a warrior out with a hunting party with a flintlock gun as they generally carried up-to-date modern arms. A Henry rifle was their favorite. The moment I saw the flintlock gun I wanted it.

So I said, "Gun good, bet good," laid my carbine on the ground, and he put his flintlock across it. It's etiquette among Indians, when you make a bet,—and no bet goes unless stakes are put up,—to place the articles wagered on the ground. No one goes near them or touches them until after the race when the winner picks up his winnings.

It was a three-hundred-yard straightaway race. This distance was measured in a level place along the trail. The horses to go from a standing start at the report of a pistol. Foster who rode for our outfit had a blanket strapped on for a saddle. The Indian, a young brave, fifteen pounds lighter than Foster, rode naked except his breech clout. His pinto pony had only a deerskin thong fastened around its lower

jaw. The Indian on his pony made a wild barbaric picture.

The Indian rider placed the end of the deerskin thong under his left thigh. Then with a quirt in each hand nodded he was ready. Foster was on the line and the starter fired his pistol. The Indian pony got away first, his rider whipping him with both quirts at every stride and yelling truly like a wild Indian. The rest of the Indians rode at his side but a little behind him yelling Ay! Yi! Yi! Yi! with all their might.

Foster was half a length behind at the hundred yards, a head behind at two hundred yards, and won the race by a head. He drily remarked as he dismounted, "The corn told in the last hundred yards." The cowboy judge at the finish looked at the Indian judge and pointing at Foster said, "He first," and held up one finger. The Indians held a consultation for about two minutes, while their judge explained the end of the race, and then rode away to their camp without a word. The Indian is a great gambler and a good loser.

The boys joked a lot about the wonderful gun I had won. But I was satisfied. The gun was a silent story to me. I tried to imagine the adventures the rifle could tell of pioneer days. One day Tom Tobin, a contemporary of Kit Carson and one of the last of the old-time scouts and trappers, visited the ranch. He told me the gun was the real thing. The five small notches cut on top of the stock stood for "good" Indians. The eleven notches underneath the stock stood for grizzly bears. Killing grizzlies, single handed with a flintlock muzzle loader, shooting round balls thirty-two to the pound, was considered a feat worthy of record.

Tobin added, "Indians are practical. To them the glory and spoils of war are the scalps and plunder. It

"COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

26

was sentiment that made the old-time scout cut a notch on his gun when he killed a foe. Indians have no sentiment and don't care for notches."

"Where do you suppose he got the gun?" I asked. "I'm afraid," replied Tobin, "that some Indian ancestor of his raised some poor trapper's scalp, way back yonder."

GREEN FROGS AND A BOTTLE OF BEER

"In dreams of the night I hear the call
Of wild ducks scudding across the lake.

We enter the blind as the crimson flush Of morn illumines the hills with light, And patiently await the first mad rush Of pinions soaring in airy flight."

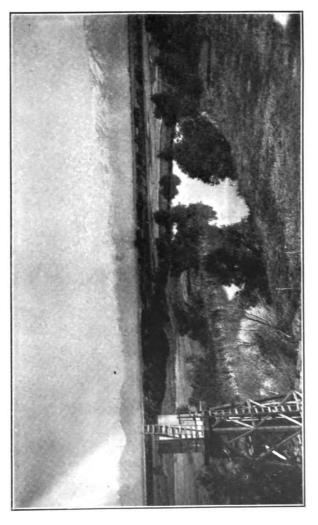
WM. HENRY DRUMMOND.

It was a great relief to get out of the dusty train and board the launch for the sail down Bear River, in Utah. with the prospect ahead of a few weeks of good duck shooting. It was a perfect Indian summer day in middle October, warm and pleasant with no wind. blue haze, softened by distance, partly veiled the distant snow-capped mountains on both sides of the North Lake. The banks of the river were flat and uninviting, but relieved in places by rows of stunted trees, from which most of the leaves had fallen. Deserted magpie nests, great bunches of tangled twigs as big as a bushel basket, perched among the higher branches of every other one of the scattered trees, were the most prominent objects in the nearby landscape. A colony of green herons camping out in several of the larger trees tossed themselves, one after the other, into the air as we passed and shuffled away in an awkward flight to other trees, where they alighted, rocking on their feet with a great waving of balancing wings, before coming to a standstill. The water was high and the launch started up small bunches of ducks, mostly redheads and mallards, at almost every bend in the river. Best of all Captain Joe said there were plenty of ducks on both marsh and lake with more coming in on their southern migration every day.

The shooters were all out on the marsh engaged in the day's sport when the launch reached the shack and tied up at the landing. It was after four o'clock before the sportsmen began straggling in, most of their boats carrying the day's limit of ducks. Jimmy, my guide for several years, was one of the last to arrive. The gentleman he had guided the past week was going home in the morning and it was my good fortune to again have Jimmy as guide, during my stay.

Jimmy did not think very highly of my suggestion that we start at four o'clock and have a try at the early morning flight. "It's nothing but enthusiasm," he said, "getting up at such an early hour. The morning flight is over before sunrise, just as the evening flight begins after sunset, and it's against the law to shoot ducks before sunrise or after sunset. But it's your first morning and we will start at four o'clock if you say so. It will take us two hours to row down to the south sink box where you want to shoot and that means it will be sunrise before we get there."

Half an hour before the first gray dawn of the following morning found us rowing down the river towards the east lake. It was pitch dark and very chilly but rowing is fine exercise to keep off the cold. Carp of all sizes were rising around the boat, not making merely rings in the water, but jumping their length in the frosty air and falling back with a mighty splash. From the noise they made some of the carp were champion heavy-weights. Now and then as we approached nearer the lake a low quack from some sleepy mallard hidden in the



The sail down Bear River, showing the beginning of East Lake at the mouth of Bear River. Note the snow-capped mountains

reeds showed that a few at least of the morning flight had eaten their fill in distant grain fields and returned to the marsh again. It was so dark that I thought it might brighten things up a bit to be a little sociable. So I said to Jimmy:

"Who was the chap you guided the past week?"

"He was a slim young fellow of about twenty, with light blue eyes and yellow corn tossel hair," replied Jimmy. "He came from the East and looked so green you wouldn't really blame cows for biting him. He seemed mighty innocent at first, but looks are sometimes awfully deceiving. He and I chatted awhile and finally the blue-eyed chap said, 'How do you make a living in this desolate looking country?'

"I'm just proud to be a hayseed,' I told him. 'I own a hay ranch forty miles from here and raise considerable hay—there's always a good demand for hay. Then I do some teaming with my four horses and every fall I come down here shooting a little and guiding a good deal. There's good money and lots of fun in guiding.'

"'Did your father live here?' asked Blue Eyes.

"Yes,' I said, 'father took up the ranch, but before that he went to sea for many years. Sailed to China, India, and all over. Saw the whole world. Of course being an old sailor he told wonderful stories of sights he had seen and things he had done in foreign parts.'

""What were his favorite stories?" asked Blue Eyes.

""Well;' I said, 'he liked best to yarn about a two-year whaling voyage he made once up Alaska way.'

""What did he tell you about it?"

"I looked round at Blue Eyes. He seemed so darned green I just thought I'd turn loose the biggest yarn I could think of. So I said his favorite story was about catching a great big whale off the Alaska coast.

"That sounds interesting,' said Blue Eyes, 'let's hear it.'

"Father's vessel,' I told him, 'was sailing up and down off the Alaska shore. Of course they always kept a careful watch out for whales and this time the lookout was sitting on top of the mast, watching for them through his spyglass. Suddenly the lookout yelled, "She blows, blows, blows."

""Where away?" sung out father who was on deck.
""Nor' nor'west by west," answered the lookout.

"'Father ran a little way up the ladder, that was leaning against the mast.' 'Ladders don't lean against the mast on board ship,' interrupted Blue Eyes, 'they are fastened to the side of the vessel and also halfway up the mast, so they cannot possibly fall or blow down.'

"'Well, we won't bother about that now,' said I, 'Father went halfway up the ladder before he saw the whale.

""He's a hundred feet long," called father. "All boats away."

"'They lowered the boats and father was in the bow of the first boat with six men behind him rowing and a chap standing up in the stern steering with a long oar. Father often told me just where the whale was, it was either "down to looward" or "up to port." I never could remember which. Father had a whole lot of rope coiled up in a barrel, with one end of it fastened to a harpoon.

"'Pretty soon father ordered the men to row slow and careful and when close to the whale, father threw the harpoon and yelled "Back all." The men at the oars backed water as hard as they could to get out of the way of the whale. The harpoon hit the whale plump in the middle. The whale thrashed round a bit and then dove straight down. The rope that was fastened to the har-

poon ran out of the barrel so fast that the side of the boat began to smoke and father had to pour water on it to keep the boat from burning up.' 'Oh, come off the perch,' said Blue Eyes. 'The rope couldn't smoke nor could it possibly set the boat on fire.'—Goodness," said Jimmy to me, "I had to laugh then, because Blue Eyes would not believe the only true thing I had said so far."

"'It smoked all right,' I told him, 'but pretty soon the rope stopped running out and in about two minutes the whale shot up almost his full length out of the water, and if there was one, there were five hundred frogs came swarming out of his mouth, great big green ones that would weigh two pounds apiece.'

"'If there was one,' said Blue Eyes softly, looking at me with a grin.

"'Oh, well,' says I, and I had to say something to save my face, 'I'll bet I've told that yarn five hundred times and no one ever caught on before. They always begin to argue about those frogs and how in Sam Hill they ever got 'way out in the ocean off Alaska. Most of them finally conclude the whale must have gone in somewhere near shore and had a frog-feed. Anyway, I never did like a story without any foundation. Give me a story or a building with a good foundation and then you've got something to go on. It always makes me sore when those condemned hogs of mine get under the house in the night and keep me awake scratching their backs on the floor beams.'

"'Well,' said Blue Eyes to me kinder soft, 'your story reminds me of something that happened last winter. I live in St. Louis and there, you know, all the houses are built in blocks and touch each other. A good looking young chap had lived in the house next mine for over a year, but I didn't know his name.'—Of course

I should have kept my mouth shut," said Jimmy to me, "but I just had to break in."

"Do you mean to tell me,' says I, 'that you lived next door to that fellow for a year and never knew his name and your house and his house joined each other?'

"That's what I said, says Blue Eyes. 'What is there strange about it?'

"'It's too all-fired strange to sound just right to me,' I told him. 'Why where I live I know every man for forty miles around and each man has four dogs and I know the name of every dog.'

"Blue Eyes shut up as tight as a clam after that. He wouldn't say another word. I always regretted speaking up as I did. We shot a week together but Blue Eyes would never tell me the end of that yarn or what it was about."

As Jimmy's story ended we reached the sink box. It was full of water. The ranchers on the upper branches of the Bear River had stopped irrigating and the river had rapidly risen the past day or two, the lake of course following suit. The water was half an inch above the top of the sink box.

"We cannot shoot here to-day," said Jimmy, standing up in the boat and looking round. "We must go somewhere else; let's row down to Single Point and try it there."

"Where and why is it called Single Point?" I asked.

"It's that long narrow point half a mile south that runs out into the lake," said Jimmy pointing towards it. "They call it Single Point because the shooting is generally on single birds, mostly pintail, spoonbill, and teal."

"That sounds good to me," I answered. "The mud should be soft with this high water and the ducks can come close in to the shore to feed."



The club launch waiting at Corinne for club members coming on the Salt Lake train



The "Blind" on Single Point

Jimmy called it half a mile, but it seemed all of two miles before we landed in the reeds at the end of Single Point. There was a trampled-down place and a few willow sticks stuck in the mud, but most of the blind had blown away. It was not really necessary to make a blind. We were well hidden sitting down in the tall reeds. Jimmy set out half of our twenty wooden decoys in separate pairs, on each side of the point, fifteen feet out from the reeds. Then taking his shovel he walked out in the shallow water and turned up forty lumps of mud, each the size of a duck, twenty yards out from the end of the point. Flying ducks would be attracted by the forty and when coming nearer would see the pairs of ducks feeding close in to the reeds. It was quite a scheme and worked all right.

After everything was arranged Jimmy paddled off with the boat and stowed it away in a little creek, first cutting enough reeds to cover it over. Suddenly I heard a warning whistle from Jimmy. A pintail was coming fairly high in the air, from the south. I could see him give a start of surprise, much like an old gossip who has just heard a racy piece of unexpected scandal, when he came around the point, a couple of gunshots out, and saw the decoys.

The pintail couldn't believe his eyes. He actually goggled looking at the decoys, then turning he flew down well out of shot on the north side of the point. There were more ducks in sight there. Something was going on that he did not know about. Right here the pintail made his fatal mistake: instead of going around the way he came he decided to make a short cut across the point. He was just the right distance away, forty-five yards, when I fired. Jimmy hunted several minutes in the tall grass before he found him.

3

A pair of teal came in from the south along the same wing prints as the pintail, only they were not half so suspicious. They did not swing around outside the point as the pintail did, but came steadily onward and with bowed motionless wings circled right in. When opposite the place where my campstool was slowly sinking in the mud, both lined up one before the other. Three birds down for two shells was a very decent start.

Fifteen minutes later another teal came flying from far out on the lake. He was passing a hundred yards distant when Jimmy gave him a couple of whistles. The teal turned and headed for the big flock of mud decoys. He was rather high up but just before reaching the decoys he made a downward swoop, evidently to seeif he was acquainted with any of them. They were all total strangers and not liking their appearance hebeganmounting upward when I fired and he came down for keeps.

It was slow shooting for some time after that. There was very little wind and the ducks seemed contented to stay where they were. Jimmy waded out, gathered the fallen ducks, and stuck them up on stakes just outside the mud decoys so they would show up as prominently as possible. Jimmy was full of conversation when he returned.

"I'm almost ashamed to tell you," he began, "the trick Blue Eyes played on me. I was a good deal peeved about it at the time but it's too good to keep."

"What was it?" I asked.

"Well, you know I tried to fool him about those green frogs; now listen to what he did to me.

"A little while after I finished the frog story we rowed up to the sink box where Blue Eyes was to shoot. It was the smallest on the lake, three feet by two and a half, and three feet deep. I reckoned it would tangle

him up a bit to sit there all day. I got out in the mud, took an empty shotgun shell box—the kind that holds 500 shells—and bailed out the sink box. Then I got out my shovel and threw up about fifty shovelfuls of mud and patted them into the shape of ducks to look like decoys.

"Meantime Blue Eyes got out a bottle of beer and drank it all by his lonesome, without offering me so much as a mouthful. Then he jumped down into the sink box and I handed him his gun, shell box, lunch, two more bottles of beer, and a bottle of water. Then I got into the boat, ready to row close in near shore, where the boat would be out of sight and not scare the ducks coming to the sink box.

"'Good luck,' I said, waving my hand.

"'Thanks,' says Blue Eyes; 'remember and come for me when I wave my hat, and say, I'll keep a bottle of beer for you.'

"I rowed halfway to shore before remembering that my bottle of beer was not in my possession. I should have rowed back and got it, but I hated to do that. It would look as though I didn't trust Blue Eyes. That's where I made my mistake. Beer in captivity should either be close to or under one's belt to be safe. But it was too late to do anything about it.

"It's customary with us guides to watch our 'sports' shoot awhile and if they are good shots it's real interesting. But after a few shots with only moderate results, we generally take a nap to pass the time. I watched Blue Eyes a spell and then became right sleepy. It was late when I woke up. I had lunch and then took a taste at the water bottle just to see if it was wet. I did not care to drink much water as I had a bottle of beer coming. "Here comes a spoonbill," whispered Jimmy, "off to the south." It was the wildest spoonbill I ever-

saw. He acted more like a cock pintail than a spoonbill. If the decoys had not been there the spoonbill would probably have alighted, but the moment he had a near view of the decoys, he checked his downward flight and, rising almost out of shot, flew overhead. I gave him my full choked barrel but it was useless.

"That was a wild beggar," said Jimmy, "he didn't like those mud decoys a little bit; guess somebody threw a charge of shot after him this morning."

"How did you come out on your bottled beer?" I asked.

"I am almost ashamed to tell you," replied Jimmy. "It was two hours before my sport got up and waved his hat. As I rowed over to the sink box I had a 'hunch' that I had better take a good drink of water and not depend too much on the promised bottle of beer.

"'I see you had fine luck,' says I to Blue Eyes, smiling my prettiest and counting about seventeen ducks scattered about in the mud and water. After that soft soap I got out of the boat and walked over to the sink box and looked in but couldn't see any sign of a bottle. I just had to put a bold face on the matter, so I said, 'I'm about perished for a drink; is my bottle of beer handy?'

"Blue Eyes raises his head and looks at me; his face cracks into a small smile, and 'No,' he says, 'the beer's gone!'

"'GONE?' said I, 'gone where?'

"'Just gone,' said Blue Eyes, 'and I was just as sorry and perhaps as sad as you are now to see it go.'

"But my bottle didn't go, did it?' said I. 'You mean your bottle has gone, don't you?'

"No,' said Blue Eyes, 'it wasn't done that way, both bottles went together.'

"'Now, friend,' says I in my most conciliating manner, 'I'm as dry as dry can be, but tell us right out loud what happened. It surely is coming to me to know where my own bottle of beer went to.'

"'It was like this,' says Blue Eyes. 'I was enjoying myself first class but only had seven birds down and was shooting real poorly. All of a sudden I heard some geese honking. I can call in a teal now and then, though they would probably come to the decoys anyway. With geese in sight I knew enough to keep down and keep still.

"'There were three of them—big Canadas. They came over me sixty yards high and I gave them both barrels and down came one. He was wounded but I finally caught him.

"Then I had the great idea—make a decoy out of him and let him call other geese. No sooner thought than I set to work. I found a few yards of twine in my shooting coat but there was nothing to tie him to—no stick, stone, or log. Then my eye lighted on those two bottles of beer.

"'I tied a bottle to each leg, carried the goose out about twenty-five yards, and carefully sunk and buried both bottles in the mud as deep as I could. There was the goose standing up looking fit and hearty. He was a glorious sight to look at as I sat in the sink box."

"He must have been,' says I, kind of sour-like.

"'Never mind,' says Blue Eyes, 'wait for the finish.

"'Pretty soon five more geese came in sight, honking and talking among themselves as geese will. My goose begins calling with all of his might.

"'I felt sure of a shot.

"The geese came in within a couple of gunshots, when all of a sudden my decoy raises himself and makes

a mad splurge with both wings. I saw both bottles pop out of the mud and with one more leap my goose was under full headway with a bottle of beer swinging from each leg. I grabbed my gun and fired both barrels at once. The goose was rising, I was rattled, and I undershot him—missed the whole shebang, goose, bottles, and all. I expect somewhere down in Texas some hunter'll get the surprise of his life when he brings down a big Canada goose with a bottle of beer tied to each leg.' He looks me in the eye with that innocent way of his and says, 'Kinder hard luck, wasn't it?'

"'Never heard of anything like it in all my life,' I tells him, giving him back the same kind of a look. Then after emptying my water bottle I takes up the oars kind of tired-like for the trip back.

"We didn't say much going home. But as we got in close to the shack and could smell the beefsteak frying, the ducks a-roasting, and the coffee boiling—especially the coffee, I began to smell a rat.

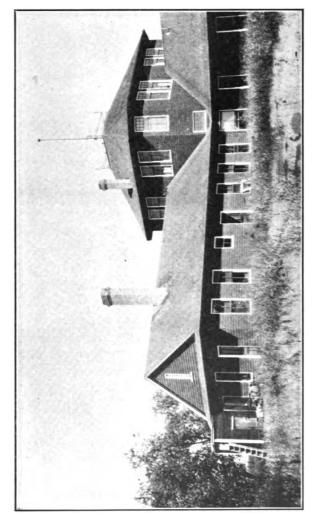
"Turning round to Blue Eyes,—I was rowing stroke —I said, 'How much foundation was there under that goose story of yours?' And Blue Eyes threw a grin back at me and says, 'Just as much as there was under your frog story.'"

Jimmy was so in earnest that I had to laugh. "So you lost your beer after all?" I said.

"Not on your life," answered Jimmy, "you cannot lose a thing you never had. But what do you think of my being promised the beer and then not getting it?"

"Oh, I don't think Blue Eyes intended that exactly. Didn't he give you a bottle the next day?" I asked.

"Yes," said Jimmy, "that's just what he did do, but even then it did not make up for my disappointment the day before."



The Home of the Bear River Duck Club

The square center of the building is the living room with its open fire-place and glass cases around the room, containing specimens of all game birds, from swan to tiny peep, shot on the club grounds. There are three wings besides the one illustrated. Two are sleeping apartments. One dining-room and kitchen, and one office, gun room, etc. The building is heated with steam

"Don't hold a grudge," I said. "Blue Eyes had the best of it. He knew you were trying to fool him with your frog story and in return he fooled you completely without your ever knowing it. Blue Eyes might have looked pretty green, but I think he was clever."

"I suppose he was," answered Jimmy, "but he certainly made me tired, and speaking of being tired I was at a guides' dance at the Big Club last night and got home at one o'clock this morning and then got up at three-forty-five to go out with you, and if you don't mind I'll go over to the boat and try a nap."

I had to laugh again after Jimmy left. Few people like jokes at their own expense. Then I looked at my watch; it was only eleven o'clock, although it seemed much later. Getting up at half-past three makes a long day. After lunch I started my pipe. It was a solid two hours before another duck came to the decoys. At last the midday flight started. Just why there should be a midday flight is hard to say. One reason perhaps is that the marsh being close to the lake is practically without a dry sandy spot and the ducks on the lake may like to come ashore about noon and sun themselves and eat a little sand or gravel. But whatever the reason the noonday flight started as usual on time. Generally this flight comes from several directions: it was different to-day as nearly all the birds came from the south. When the flight started Jimmy was asleep and I was playing a lone hand in the blind.

It's always satisfactory to shoot alone. You are never hurried in the actual shooting. Of course, the lone shooter is responsible for all mishaps—for not seeing birds until they have passed, for lost birds and a score of other things; but all drawbacks are outweighed when the ducks come your way. The opportunity then

is yours alone. The excitement of the approach, the imitated call that brings closer acquaintance, the aim, the shot, the falling bird, and the "splash" that records the prize, all belong to you. There's no contention. There's no uncertainty. Nobody can claim the birds you shot. Nothing stands between yourself and the day's limit but your own skill and perhaps a little luck. You are on your mettle and must do your best.

A pair of spoonbills were the first comers. They saw the decoys and never hesitated, coming in so unexpectedly close that I simply waited to see what would happen. They pitched down into the water not more than ten yards from the blind. A duck shooter will stand a good deal, but he draws the line when ducks fly into the blind and alight on his gun barrel, which was almost what these spoonbills did. We all three jumped about the same instant, I to my feet and the spoonbills high in air. It was an easy double. Only one lost bird so far that morning. I began to pat myself figuratively on the back. But pride cometh before a fall. I missed my next four shots and they were all at mallards too, the gamest duck of them all.

The sound of the double shot had hardly died away when a pair of mallards coming from the south took all my attention. I wanted both of them but I bagged neither. They appeared to be coming to the decoys, perhaps would pass a trifle outside of them. Then and there I made my mistake. They surely would have come within range if I had only kept quiet. But in my eagerness to help a good thing along I gave them the mallard feed call. Perhaps my accent was out of tune; something certainly went wrong, as both mallards the moment they heard my call rose rapidly and passed

high up over the blind. I gave them both barrels without starting a single feather.

I lighted my pipe to smooth my ruffled feelings, then glanced upwards; another pair of mallards were passing overhead. They were fifty yards high and going faster than usual, probably because they saw me move when I picked up the gun. I wanted them so badly that perhaps a little overanxiety was mixed up with my aim, which resulted in a clean and beautiful—double miss.

A little bunch of five mallards came flying fast and almost out of shot again from the south. They were very high and I was fearful my double gun would not do business at their altitude. Jimmy had left his pump gun in the blind and knowing his gun was extra full choke, I picked it up and got ready. The mallards were a good deal higher than the last pair, but I let go four shells. Two mallards came tumbling down and at the same time a voice off in the reeds called, "Say there! whose shooting my pump gun?"

"I am," I called back, "five mallards came over so high I was afraid it would strain my double gun to shoot at them."

"You can use my gun all you want to," called the voice, "when I'm awake, but don't shoot it when I'm asleep. My gun makes such a ferocious roar it wakes me up."

A great many ducks came in from the south but nearly all were flying so high as to be secure from all danger. Not the least notice was taken of my most persuasive call. They just attended to their own business and flew northward until out of sight. They were mostly mallards and pintails. A few of the smaller ducks gave me an occasional visit. The biggest flock was a bunch of ten teal. They also came from the

south but were flying low over the water. I neither moved or tried to call them but they came straight on, passing my "muds" on the outside. They were well scattered out but I managed to get three with both barrels.

"Goodness," said Jimmy, who had just returned to the blind, rubbing his eyes and yawning after his nap, "you have been doing nothing else but shoot the last hour. You must have close to the limit by this time."

"I have twenty-three," I said. "Two shy of the limit. But get down," I whispered; "look south, see those seven mallards high up."

As they came over, Jimmy fired twice at them without the slightest result. Loading up he laid his gun down and remarked:

"I might as well go to sleep again as keep on throwing lead at those high fliers. I'll see if I can call some of them down."

Jimmy was a fine duck caller, but I had faint hopes he could win the confidence of any of these cloud scorching birds. Again three mallards came in sight, sky high, from the south, flying a course that would bring them almost directly over us. When they were a hundred yards away Jimmy turned loose three long ringing "quacks" followed by a half a dozen shorter ones. I could see the mallards' heads move; they were looking for their friends that called so loudly. Then Jimmy gave them a perfect feed call. The combination was irresistible. The mallards lowered slightly, although still far out of shot, then flew swiftly onward a hundred yards before in a great wide sweep they circled back and on motionless wings glided right up to the decoys. I whispered a low "don't shoot" to Jimmy. who turned and looked at me, the picture of surprise.

One mallard actually alighted in the water but seeing the others continuing in flight instantly flew after them. It was a splendid exhibition of calling on Jimmy's part. It is not perhaps much of a trick to call mallards to the decoys when they are flying low, looking for friends to feed with. But to call flight birds down from the sky, is the highest art of the caller's skill.

"That was a queer break of yours," Jimmy said after the ducks had passed. "What's the use of calling ducks to the decoys if we don't shoot at them? It's just a waste of breath."

"That's perfectly true," I told him, "and I don't blame you for being disappointed after giving such a wonderful exhibition of the art of calling. But the mallards were so graceful and fearless as they made that wide sweep and came on so confidently to the decoys, that I preferred to remember and carry away with me the memory of the perfect picture of wild life they made, rather than shoot and spoil it all."

"Well," replied Jimmy, "of course you can do as you like but that kind of shooting don't make the game bag very heavy." The three mallards proved to be our last opportunity for a shot. The midday flight stopped as suddenly as it began and with it the day's shooting ended.

"It's nearly four," I said to Jimmy, "and time to pick up our ducks and start for the shack. It makes a long day getting up at three-thirty, four hours ahead of my ordinary daily schedule. After this I expect little trouble in controlling my enthusiasm for starting out in the morning before nine o'clock."

Jimmy laughed, then after putting his pair of oars in the rowlocks, he turned to me and said, "Nine o'clock suits me down to the ground."

THE VICISSITUDES OF SINK-BOX SHOOTING

Then across the great, gray, dripping, sodden canopy of sky, Sweep the winged hosts of the Northland, where the open waters lie, Now the gamebag's overflowing—for October's sullen frown Is the joy of dog and master—when the ducks come down.

JAMES W. FOLEY.

It was barely daylight. The morning star was still visible, but it was daylight. The east was brightening every minute. I had left a fishline with a single hook baited with three blue bottle flies in the water over night and as I laid my gun and shell box down on the little landing, I gave a pull at the fishline. It felt heavy; my victim proved a six-pound carp, a poor eating fish with a most unprepossessing personal appearance. When everything was in the boat we started rowing down the river to the East Lake.

An enormous flock of red-winged blackbirds were strung along on both sides of the river. There were thousands of them, preparing for their southern migration. A few hundred would start up as we rowed by and then, following suit, the whole army of blackbirds, rising in one huge black swarm, would fly in their waving flight, all twittering together, a hundred yards behind us and alight again on both willow trees and tules.

Ours was the first boat out that morning and paddling quietly around a bend we scared up a big flock of ducks that were feeding at the mouth of the river. They rose from the water in little bunches, one almost instantly after another, in a continued splashing, quacking, hur-



"Ours was the first boat out that morning and paddling quietly around a bend we scared up a big flock of ducks that were feeding at the mouth of the river"

Courtesy of Shiplers, Salt Lake City

ried flight. The final half dozen ducks in the photograph, that are still in the water, where all were feeding when our boat came upon the scene, have not yet flown, but alarm is in the air and every swimming or standing duck has his or her head high as possible, eager to meet trouble very much farther off than halfway. As our boat came a trifle nearer, the laggards were of one mind and sprang all together in the air and made off after their companions.

The East Lake is a part and portion of the north edge of the Great Salt Lake. Naturally shallow, the silt constantly poured into it by the Bear River made it still shallower. A few inches of lowering water level in the Great Salt Lake gradually drained a dozen square miles of this shallow north edge. With the vanishing of the acrid salt water in which nothing will live, much less grow, Bear River poured its fresh floods over the mud-flats. Wild grasses and duck food quickly grew in the fresh water and the East Lake became a paradise for wild fowl.

The mouth or overflow of the river was shallow. The silt brought down for many years had made many shifting mudbanks and sandbars. We often ran the boat on a mudbank where the day before was a foot of water. A big ox skull, stuck on a stake, marked the deepest channel of the overflow from the many smaller branches that were impassable in places even for a row-boat.

Higher up, the banks of the river were lined with tules and cat-tails, with willow trees growing behind them. This growth extended to within fifty rods of the mouth of the overflow. There the rims on both sides of the river were soft mud an inch or two above the level of the water. A few small weeds had started growing along the rims. It was nature's way of holding the mud

together long enough to allow the young tules to get a start in life.

Beyond the ox skull was the East Lake, our daily shooting grounds. There were no clouds. A little breeze was blowing but scarcely enough to ripple the surface of the water. Jimmy after leaving me and my possessions in the Davis Island sink box, rowed away and with the skiff was soon lost from view in the reeds along the shore. Sitting in the sink box I was below the level of the water, entirely hidden from sight but in the center of seventy-five duck decoys, two thirds of them lumps of black mud and getting more sunburned every minute.

It was very quiet on the marsh. Ducks were scarce and most of the hunters that came down for the shooting at the opening of the season had returned home. The silence of the great marsh was very pleasant after the constant shooting on all sides of the opening days of the season. Outside of ducks and geese, the marsh people are never in a hurry to get up in the morning. The remnants of the daylight flight of ducks were still flying over the distant marsh, alighting in little bunches in different pond holes to spend the day feeding and sleeping. Outside of these distant ducks and a couple of meadow larks that were making short crisp flights along the shore, all hands were still resting.

A large hawk, apparently the earliest riser in marsh society, came zigzagging and dipping just above the grass, slowly quartering the ground, hunting for breakfast. Suddenly rising a few feet he poised motionless on almost invisible wings, then darted down into the tall grass where I lost sight of him.

A crow came flying across the lake, every now and then uttering a very cross sounding "caw," evidently an old lady crow, a scout, sent forward to look the ground over and see if all was well. Far behind her came four other crows, flying silently but taking orders from the scout ahead. The female crow is the boss of the family. An old female is the natural leader and commander of all flocks of crows; wily, sagacious, and always suspicious, she leads, the others follow.

I didn't like that crow. Either this identical bird or one just like her had flown high overhead the day before and by mocking shouts and scoldings frightened away a nice bunch of ducks that were coming to the decoys. Or at least I imagined so. The crow was easily two gunshots away and it seemed a good time to read her the riot act. So I presented her with a charge of number seven shot. The shot struck; it was too far to do any harm but it certainly ruffled her temper. She flopped over, lost a stroke or two of her wings, then recovering she let out a string of crow oaths at me and a lot of swear words of warning to the four crows following silently behind. They all turned and went back.

Half an hour later I saw the entire program repeated. The old lady crow in advance, with her henpecked husband and their three offspring following behind, crossed the lake two hundred yards south of the sink box. This time they got safely over and alighted silently on the edge of the marsh, probably after small shell fish.

The gulls had the lake all to themselves. Gulls are venerated in Utah. Two big bronze gulls mounted on a tall pedestal form one of the sights of Salt Lake City. They commemorate the escape from famine of the early settlers of the Salt Lake Valley. The half-grown crops were attacked one summer by swarms of locusts. All manner of ways were tried to destroy them, but where one was killed, ten seemed to take its place. Matters

looked very serious and prayers were offered for Divine assistance.

Almost immediately in answer to the prayers, great flocks of gulls appeared and quickly destroyed the plague of locusts. To-day the gull is a sainted bird in Utah, at least there is a State fine of \$25.00 for killing one and it takes a saint to give up that much money in Utah.

There's another odd thing about gulls, there are just as many now as there were twenty years ago. A rocky island in East Lake is their favorite nesting place. is covered with gulls in the spring. Many families are reared each summer. None are killed, but every fall sees the same number of gulls flying about as the year In fact, I know several individual gulls by sight from odd feather markings and see them year after year cruising over the lake. Where do the young birds go? Are they turned adrift by cruel-hearted parents and told in emphatic gull language to go elsewhere and make a living, or what becomes of them?

In the East Lake there seem to be two parties of different politics, possibly standpatters and progressives, among the gulls, each faction occupying different mudbanks as roosting places at night. hereabouts are not early risers. It was eight o'clock before there were even symptoms of wakefulness on the two mudbanks. I watched them through field-glasses. The first sign of preparedness was when a gull on the edge of the mudbank opened and stretched its wings. Then several other gulls went through the same performance. By that time the first gull was executing a slow comical sort of dance, taking the kinks out of its legs. Then all began dancing. Finally a big brown gull with a gray head and wing feathers sprang clumsily into the air and flew slowly over to take a look at my sink box.

It was "Casey"; he was always the first on the wing and the first to make a morning call on me. It was not a sentimental visit. "Casey" didn't care at all for me personally, for his mind was of the practical order. He wanted to breakfast on a dead duck that was out of gunshot of the sink box. I have often wondered what "Casey" did when there was no one shooting there. Did he still cruise up and down with the same expectant businesslike air that he did when I was in the sink box and watching him, or did he give up hope of a meat breakfast and tackle the tougher job of finding something eatable alongshore?—for gulls after all are scavengers.

"Casey" always watched every duck shot at. When they fell within gunshot of the blind, he flew by regarding the victim in a casual, impersonal manner. But woe be it to the wounded duck who fell outside the charmed circle, for "Casey" knew somehow just how far my gun carried. I took a long shot at a redhead duck. Hit hard, he fell on a slant three hundred yards away. Swimming straight ahead he landed and waddled up on a mudbank and sat there hunched up as if asleep.

"Casey" spied him and high in air circled around him, carefully taking in his condition and apparent strength and that he was out of gunshot from the sink box. Being satisfied the duck was unable to escape, "Casey" alighted beside him. Two smaller gray gulls followed suit but they were of the spectator class, only lookers on. "Casey" walked up closely and looked at the duck first with one eye, then with the other. The duck was not dead. It was still able to hold up its head,

but it never would go far, much less fly again. We could have picked him up going home, if it hadn't been for "Casey."

A duck's skeleton is very light, just strong enough to carry the rest of the body in the air. The skull is round and compact but the covering of bone is fragile. Suddenly "Casey" brought his bill down with all his force, on top of the duck's head. "Casey" was "at the bat."

The duck's wings opened and convulsively trembled. The gray wings of the gull waved and flickered in the air as he pecked out and ate the duck's breasts. In a few minutes "Casey" flew slowly away to stand and quietly ruminate on his mudbank. With "Casey" out of sight the gray gulls and a friend or two attacked the carcass. There was a great scolding and fluttering of wings. In a few minutes these gulls also flew away and all was quiet again on the mudbank. When we rowed by that evening, going home, nothing remained but a head, two wings, and a bunch of feathers.

My marsh is probably visited by more shore birds than any other in the country. It's against the law at present to shoot shore birds. The bulk of them go south before the duck season opens and ducks and geese are too plentiful in the fall to bother with shore birds. That's why they are so tame and friendly. A flock of the larger shore birds flew over the decoys; there were two sickle-bill curlew, five large godwits, and about twenty avocets. The avocets were in the lead with the long-billed curlew and godwits bringing up the rear.

Curlew are scarce to-day to what they were a dozen years ago. They were plenty enough then to flock by themselves and their rolling harsh note could be heard every day. Godwits are still fairly plentiful but their

numbers are diminishing. The most abundant of the larger shore birds are the avocets, a white bird with a splash of black on each wing, with legs as long and body as large as a winter yellow-leg. Avocets are restless feeders, always aimlessly walking about and constantly dipping their bills in the water, feeding on minute insects.

A bunch of a dozen avocets flew a dozen yards high directly over the sink box. Each bird as it passed cocked its head on one side and took a good look at me as though it wanted to see what kind of a strange animal it was that lived in a square hole in the water. Avocets are the most independent of all shore birds. They pay no attention to any whistle or call, but go wherever it looks attractive and promising in the way of shallow water and feed.

A winter or greater yellow-leg whistle came clear and sharp from the clouds. I answered it, but the whistle came but once again and then from a greater distance. The bird itself was invisible and I was sorry not to get a glimpse of him for old times' sake. There's nothing like old friends and winter yellow-leg snipe and I have had several good hearty tussles together in days gone by. I have never seen a summer or lesser yellow-leg on the marsh, but both summer and winter yellow-legs are plentiful earlier in the season, along with innumerable smaller bay birds. The shallow mud flats in the lake and the pond holes in the marsh suit them exactly. Nearly all these birds go south before the beginning of the duck season.

Eight teal came in from behind, alighting with considerable of a flutter among the decoys in front of the sink box. I could hear distant whoops from Jimmy, who seeing the teal come in, imagined I was asleep.

How tiny the teal looked swimming in the water alongside of the decoys. Perhaps that was why the teal felt out of place surrounded by a brand of unknown, silent ducks of monstrous size. The leader of the teal gave a little whistle. They all flew gently along the surface of the water, half circled the decoys, and splashed down again behind me. They seemed rather astonished that the decoys gave them no welcome. It was not hospitable.

The teal were uneasy and bunched up ready to fly, then rose in the air. They did not spring straight up, as they do when alarmed, but flew low down as before. I gave a low whistle or two in imitation of their feed call. They seemed pleased to hear it and again circled and alighted a little farther out beyond their first resting place. Again they seemed uneasy and sat with heads up, watching. Then they flew. This time it was away to a more neighborly vicinity.

They were green-wing teal, the hardy brothers of the blue-wing. Oddly enough ninety per cent. of all ducks hatched on the marsh each year are blue-winged teal. We raise them and other people shoot them. The bluewings go south in September before our shooting season opens. Sometimes a few blue-wing teal are shot on the opening days of the season, but not even this can be counted on.

There are many beautiful sights among game birds. In fact all game birds are clipper built and racy. Each kind has a measure of insurance against attack in its daily life. The whirr of the partridge and the quail is disturbing. The rapidity of flight of ducks and geese often carries them to safety, but the shore birds have practically no defense. Their habit of answering an imitation of their call and coming innocently to decoys

has proved their ruin. Fifty years ago golden plover were plentiful. They were innocent, confiding little birds. Sometimes flock after flock, even after being shot into, would return again and again to the decoys in response to invitation whistles. To-day golden plover are few and far between.

It was therefore a great surprise to suddenly see one of the most beautiful sights among the game birds, several flocks of golden plover flying in the bright sunlight, high in air. They looked like flying gold pieces, fresh from the mint. There were three flocks of them, forty rods apart, when they first came in sight. Evidently attracted in their flight by the North Lake they had stopped for a drink and a bath in fresh water. As I watched, the three flocks drew closer together, then rose higher, until finally joining in one compact band, they headed southward towards the land of good old summertime.

It is more than possible if I had been shooting as much as usual, the sound of my gun might have alarmed them and driven them to continue their journey by another route. It was most fortunate, for I wouldn't have missed seeing them fly over, for all the ducks on the marsh.

There were a dozen large flocks of a grayish long-billed bird, that often flew twittering over the water and sometimes over the decoys. Somehow they looked familiar but I could not exactly place them. That evening I asked what they were. They were dowitchers or brown-backs in winter plumage. They looked very neat indeed in their gray winter suits, far different from the brown birds I was accustomed to see in August. Then they came readily to the decoys in answer to the summer yellow-leg call. But these gray-uniformed

chaps paid no attention to any kind of whistle. It seemed odd they should change their social habits with their coat. Perhaps when traveling they were afraid of "confidence" men.

A mudhen came flying from the reeds on the marshes' edge, saw the decoys, and pitched down to them, tobogganning along ten feet on the surface of the water before coming proudly to a standstill. The mudhen gave the decoys a haughty stare and then turned her back on them and began feeding. I picked up a junk of mud and threw it at her. Alarmed, with wings widely waving and legs paddling, she shot fifteen feet along the surface of the water before rising in the air and then flew back to the safer shelter of the marsh grass.

It was warm. The wind had died away, leaving the surface of the lake as smooth as glass. There was no flight of ducks, but several single birds, a pair of teal and four spoonbill, flew in and alighted to the decoys at various intervals during the morning. They either flew in a minute, or if they stopped longer would begin preening their feathers and sometimes pretended to feed a little. But all, in every instance, seemed to know something was wrong. Gradually they would drift sixty yards away from the decoys, then with heads up look the decoys over for a minute or two and fly away. I did not shoot at any of them.

There was one wily cock pintail, that was certainly puzzled. He circled round and round, out of shot, carefully looking over my outfit of decoys a dozen times. At last he came in and dropped down within two feet of the water, then suddenly changing his mind, he rose again on hurried wings and made off, looking back as he went as if to say "you almost fooled me that time." Even then he wasn't satisfied but circled three times.

and then, as if his fears were finally allayed, came in and pitched down, alighting just outside the decoys. There he sat waiting patiently for some duck to say something. But the silence was unbroken, until I poked my head over the edge of the sink box and called, "Holloa! How are you?" In all his young life he had never heard a duck talk like that before. It was not at all what he expected. No duck ever got out of the water and flew away quicker than the pintail did.

It was very quiet for some time after the pintail left. I sat idly in the sink box, ate my lunch, and smoked a cigar. It was nearly one o'clock. The sun had disappeared behind a great bank of gray clouds that looked as though they were rolled up and tied together. The wind came in quick gusts. Everything appeared favorable for duck shooting, except the ducks.

At last far to the south I saw something white against the background of dark clouds. A moment later through my field-glasses I could see moving wings. Whatever they were they were coming straight down the center of the lake. It seemed well to be prepared. I crouched low in the stand, drew the number seven shot shells out of my automatic and reloaded with number three shot. Looking over the edge of the sink box I saw they were snow geese. There were eleven of them. I could plainly hear them talking among themselves, the silly gabble that makes one of the wisest of birds appear a fool.

As the geese were heading they would pass a hundred yards west of me. They were two hundred yards south and coming on rapidly, gabbling among themselves. It was time to do something or lose all chance of a shot. I began to imitate their cry as best I could, then reaching into my shell box I took out a newspaper that was

in it and crushed it into a round loose ball. I could see their heads turn, as attracted by my call, they looked at the decoys. Hoping they would think it a stray wandering snow goose, I tossed my newspaper ball high in air.

My scheme worked finely. The paper ball fell in the water and glided smoothly along before the wind. I did not dare to call again. I had done all I could do. The curtain was up, the scene set. Would the actors do their part? Then my heart gave a big beat, I could feel my fingers tremble. The geese had turned, they were coming straight for the sink box. They intended looking into the matter and see who the wandering brother that was paddling around in the water might be.

I was kneeling on one knee in about twelve inches of water and could feel its cold touch as it trickled down inside my rubber boot, but I did not dare move. Once headed for the sink box, the geese came on as stately as soldiers on parade, only there was a lot more talking in the ranks.

It was a beautiful sight as the birds, looking in every direction, trying to find their comrade, came over me. They appeared thirty yards away, but probably were fifty when I rose to fire. Geese are so large they always look closer then they really are.

It was more than likely that the leader of the geese would be a venerable ancient, so I fired at the next in line. The goose drifted gently down in the same attitude as when shot, with wings and neck extended, striking the water with a little splash. Then his head dropped almost immediately and he lay still. At the second shot, the third bird in line crumpled up and came down with the regulation smash. My third

shot was at one of the last of the flock. The only result was a handful of feathers, white as snow, that floated in the air for an instant, then drifted slowly downward. I fired again at the same goose, leading him ten feet. The shot rattled smartly against his body, but the goose flew swiftly onward for two hundred yards as though nothing was the matter. Then suddenly after a quick upward spring of a dozen feet into the air, the goose feel dead. Jimmy came out from the reeds, waved his hat, and walking out in the mud and water picked up the goose.

I went out and gathered both geese that fell near me and laid them over the edge of the sink box. Their white bodies were the most prominent things in the landscape. Ducks would see them a mile away. So I tucked them up in a corner of the sink box, out of sight. Dead ducks are generally allowed to lay where they fall and act as decoys in places where the water is shallow, except when some of the first victims shot are retrieved and set up on stakes as decoys. The grand pick up is made at the end of the day when the shooting is over.

There were few ducks in sight. Suddenly to my great delight ducks of all sorts and sizes appeared flying in every direction. They came in large and small flocks, in smaller bunches and single birds. A rowboat was coming and it scared up all the ducks in the vicinity. Ducks are easily frightened when they see a boat, but the same ducks will come readily to decoys, if the hunter is out of sight. For this reason some people advocate a law preventing the use of decoys in duck shooting, in order that the duck crop may be perpetuated. Frightened ducks rarely fly in to the decoys, but they are attracted by them and often come within shot to

look them over as they pass. Frightened birds are always fast-flying birds and you earn all you get of them.

I had passed up a lot of opportunities to shoot that It was very enjoyable to see ducks fly in and alight among the decoys and interesting to study their habits and learn their calls should they make any. Now if I wanted to secure the day's limit of twenty-five ducks it must be done in the next two hours. It was possible to get them in the next thirty minutes if the coming boat made enough disturbance. The largest flock in the air were blue-bills. They were separating themselves as widely as possible from the coming boat and incidentally heading for me. I peeked over the top of the sink box. Blue-bills somehow never paid very much attention to my blue-bill call, so it seemed best to keep quiet. They came up within eighty yards, then turned and appeared to be heading for another country. Not knowing what else to do I gave them the commonest of all duck calls, the clucking feed call, the noise ducks make when feeding. It sounds precisely like the "cluck" drivers make at a slow-going horse.

The blue-bills heard it, circled, and flew by a gunshot away, flying very swiftly, but it was the final chance and I let go two shells. Blue-bills oftentimes bunch up forward when coming to decoys. All hands want to be in front and see what's going on. My first shot raked a little group of curiosity seekers and three came down. My second shell created a large puncture in the atmosphere. The birds were rising rapidly after my first shot and the charge went under them. They were too far away to shoot again with any hope of success.

Two of the three birds were only wounded and I had to get out in the mud and reshoot both of them. One

was easy, but I had a merry chase after the one with the broken wing. The next birds to show up were a pair of mallards. They were thoughtful and considerate enough not to put in an appearance until I was safely ensconced again in the sink box, after my blue-bill chase. I fired two shells quickly, leading each bird eight feet. Each duck was in the center of the charge and each swept on ten feet through the air before falling.

Seven green-wing teal had been feeding three gunshots out in the lake for the past hour. Seeing all the other ducks careering and sweeping through the air, they took it into their heads to fly also. They swung around towards me. I gave two or three little teal calls. They flew by with no intention of alighting. Two bunched and fell to the first shell. The other five jumped straight up as they always do. I fired two more shots, each three feet over separate single teal and one fell. There was little use in shooting again. If another was hit at that distance it would be a miracle if I could get him. A wounded bird would only fall and swim away.

The wind was blowing fairly hard. Small waves were dashing against the side of the sink box, sending a little slap of water over the edge. The side boards were stuck down in the mud on all four sides of the sink box. I dug them up and raised them their full height of eight inches; they would keep the water out unless the wind increased considerably.

The ducks were flying and milling round and round all over the lake. I could hear other sportsmen shooting rapidly in various directions. The coming of the rowboat started the birds and the coming storm and freshening wind kept them from alighting again. The

larger flocks were rising in the air preparatory to seeking more quiet quarters. The small bunches and single birds were seeking company before going elsewhere. Four widgeon came over from behind; fortunately I was well down and hidden. I clucked to them. They were evidently seeking for additional friends, then with a lot of merry companions they would fly away to some stubble field to feed. Unfortunately for the widgeon my decoys were slow flyers. All four of the widgeon came right in to see about it. I stopped two of them. After the two dropped, the other two darted down and made off close to the surface of the water. This is a mean shot and my second shell churned the water behind them. Disgusted I aimed at one of them, then raised my sight until the bird was hidden. long shot but that time he landed in the water. One of the two that fell at the first barrel was swimming away. I waded out after him but it took three shells to stop him for keeps.

The rolled-up gray clouds had untied themselves and were gradually spreading across the heavens, cutting off any glimpse of blue sky. The wind was still rising. The waves had washed down my mud decoys, leaving only fragments of mud here and there projecting from the water. The twenty wood decoys looked as lone-some as shipwrecked sailors. No duck of any intelligence would be attracted by ducks who tried to rest or feed in water, tossed about as my wooden decoys were. My only show for a shot was at chance birds that happened to fly over. My next shot was at a redhead, a long shot at a duck flying fast before a gale of wind. It was a perfect miss.

A wave larger than usual slapped against the side boards and a couple of gallons of water tumbled into the sink box. It was time to bail again. The bailer was a wooden shell box that, when new, held five hundred loaded shells. I stooped down, dipped the bailer in the water, and lifted it running over and dripping and—dropped it again. Five mallards were flying close overhead. Grabbing the gun I fired one shot; that was all, because as I fired I bumped into the bailer, that full of water had sunk to the bottom of the sink box, and lost my balance.

Mist-laden clouds leak very easily in Utah. A fine rain started. For the first time that day a good-sized bunch of canvasbacks came flying in my direction. They were low down and heading for the marsh. My gun held but one cartridge of number seven shot; all my other number seven shells were shot away. There were three boxes of shells left in my shell case, but they were all number three. I loaded up with number three shells ready to give the "cans" a warm reception. They came straight on, passing me on the left hand not over forty yards high. I fired all five shells, knocking down three. Two of the "cans" were dead, the other one swam quickly away the moment he struck the water.

A series of larger waves than usual slapped against the side boards, sending buckets of water into the sink box. It began to rain hard. Gathering my belongings together including the two geese I got out of the sink box. In a minute it was full to the brim with water. There was enough water in and around the sink box to satisfy the most rabid prohibitionist. It was impossible to see the shore through the rain, but I could shout and I did. Instantly Jimmy's voice answered. It was a relief to hear him. As the wind blew the water in around the sink box, the dead ducks floated away

towards the shore and Jimmy in the boat was picking them up.

"How many ducks did you shoot?" called a voice.

"Three geese and eighteen ducks; I have two of the geese here," I answered.

"I have picked up twelve ducks now," called the voice, "and the two 'cans' you just shot makes four-teen."

"Bully for you," I shouted; "that's more than I expected; row in and give me my slicker that's in the boat, this rain is wet."

Jimmy rowed in to the sink box; he was as wet as a drowned rat, but he didn't seem to mind a little thing like that.

"Why didn't you shoot this morning?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," I answered; "didn't just exactly feel like it, had more fun watching the birds and wondering what they would do next."

"It's all right to watch shore birds and gulls and the like of that," said Jimmy "but there's no need to watch ducks when you know what they will do next."

"And what will they do next?" I asked just to tease him.

"They'll fly away mighty damned quick," replied Jimmy.

Jimmy was right, yet I was glad I had had my morning.

A FEW DUCKS AND JIMMY'S TRIP TO CALIFORNIA

"I start about de sun-rise an I put out ma decoy
An I see Bateese, he sneak along de shore
An before it's comin' breakfas', he's hollerin' for hees boy
For carry home two dozen duck or more,
While I'm freezin' in de blind—me—from four o'clock to nine
An every duck she's passin' up so high
Deres blue bill an butter ball, and red head de fines' kind
But I might as well go shootin' at the sky."

WM. HENRY DRUMMOND.

In telling about that morning—I suppose I had best start with the music—Jimmy was whistling and when Jimmy whistles, you can bet the shooting is going to be mighty slim. I had a hunch that Jimmy was right this time, it was so warm and calm, so I said to him, "I am going to let you shoot to-day, to change the luck."

"Well now," said Jimmy, "wouldn't that jar you. I've noticed the days you let me shoot, there ain't nothing to shoot at, it's too pleasant or too calm or too something, but I'll turn my old pump gun loose often enough to-day for you to hear it, anyway."

That morning—to begin over again—found us in a far corner of the East Lake. The early dawn changed into daylight and the marsh and lake grew slowly into shape, but the expected daybreak flight of ducks failed to appear on time. The ducks were few and those we saw were shy. Perhaps one reason was the sudden and unexpected appearance of a small tule island, where

"COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

there was none the day before. The island was our boat, surrounded and partly covered by tules or long marsh reeds.

As soon as the blind was fixed to Jimmy's satisfaction he put out our half dozen duck decoys, all we had with They looked a bit scanty and to make a bigger show, Jimmy took his shovel and turned up fifty big oblong lumps of black shiny mud in the two inches of water. From a distance, it was a picture of a small raft of ducks, feeding near a small tule island. Occasionally a straggler or a bunch of three or four birds, mostly spoonbills, would come near enough to look us over. But these few long shots only resulted in bagging three ducks. Once a big flock of mallards swooped down from the clouds and started a tour of investigation around us. It was exciting while it lasted. They often looked like coming to the decoys, especially when Jimmy turned up his duck call, but each time they whirled aside before entering the danger zone.

The morning flight, or rather what little there was of it, was over. It was ten o'clock. I had eaten my lunch and my pipe was in full blast, while Jimmy was just finishing his last piece of pie. Noon may be the regular lunch hour, but very few lunches survive ten o'clock on the marsh.

"Did you know," began Jimmy, "that I went to California last winter?"

"Why no," I said; "what was your idea for going out there."

"Lonesomeness I guess. I was living alone on the ranch and it was dull work. It got mighty cold after Christmas. I had no one to talk to. No neighbors, nothing to do, and nothing to see except snow everywhere and perhaps a crow flying over or a coyote down in the pasture. So I hiked out for the roses and orange groves."

"Did you see many of them?"

"Mighty seldom," said Jimmy, "but I had the gosomewhere-fever and just had to dig out. I did not care to waste any money on traveling expenses so I only took a couple of dollars, but that's a long way from being broke."

"How did you make out?" I asked.

"Oh! first-rate, didn't have a bit of trouble anywhere and caught on to a lot of experience. Took a ticket for Ogden, that cost eighty cents. There I bought five pounds of crackers and a pound of cheese, and to keep up with the preparedness business, I bought a plug of chewin' tobacco."

"Chewing tobacco! you don't chew do you?"

"You'll see why a little later," replied Jimmy, looking wise.

"I filled a bottle with water and about nine that night I crawled into a side-door Pullman. Did you ever try to sleep in a moving empty freight car?" inquired Jimmy.

"Why, no," I said, "that's something I never tried."

"Well, you don't want to, it's darned uncomfortable. The floor is hard and gets harder as you go along. You're choked with dust and the wheels make a terrible racket, but it beats walking out of sight. I had nothing but my shoes for a pillow, but I got to sleep somehow." Suddenly I was awakened by—"Look north, quick. It's a canvasback, coming this way. Get your gun ready and keep down."

I peeked through the tules, but it was several seconds before I made out a black flying speck, that quickly grew larger. It was a wonderful example of farsightedness. Jimmy's trained eyes, accustomed to looking great distances, not only caught sight of the duck, but named him, before my fairly longsighted eyes could see anything.

A canvasback duck is like a bumblebee. When he starts for somewhere he makes a straight line for it. Ducks differ greatly in this respect. Take an old pintail for example. He is curious and cautious to the core. His long suit is circling a hundred yards away. Your only show to get him is to keep well hidden and take a long chance should he, by accident, miscalculate and swoop in within shot.

Jimmy had his pump gun ready, loaded with only a couple of shells, instead of six, so as to play fair with my double. The canvasback took no notice of decoys or stand, but swept by, sixty yards away, facing a brisk wind that had just started up. Jimmy fired both shells and never touched a feather. My gun was at my shoulder and aiming away ahead I let go the full choke left barrel. To my surprise down came the drake with one lone shot in the head.

"By Gosh!" said Jimmy, "that's one on me; I fired eight feet ahead of him and missed clean. How much leeway did you give him?" "About eighteen feet," I replied. "He was making rag time after you sent those two shells after him. I allowed four feet for windage."

"Windage! Huh, I don't believe in windage. It isn't possible that wind can blow aside such little duds as shot. Confound it, I guess after this I had better shoot on calm days,—but as I was saying about my railroad journey:

"There was a light in my eyes and I thought at first it must be sun up, then something that felt painfully like the toe of a heavy boot began to tickle my ribs. Still half asleep I sat up and heard a man's voice saying, 'Halloa, Jimmy, where in Halifax did you come from?'

"It was Bill Carstairs, the only brakeman I knew on the road. We gassed a while and then Bill says, 'There's no use staying here, come on back to the calaboose and take it easy. Say; got any chewin'?'

"The next afternoon Bill said, 'The next stop is the end of my run. If anybody says anything to you on the next run, just say'—Jerusalem! See this bunch of teal coming." There were at least a dozen in the bunch and they just hurled themselves like bullets out of a gun, flying down wind. I whistled a low note and they turned, their sides gleaming in the sun, all as one bird. It seemed to me, looking through the tules, that they were going away from us. Lifting my head so I could see over the reeds to make sure, the teal saw me. The whole bunch jumped fifteen feet straight up in the air and scattered in every direction. We each got one.

Jimmy laughed as he said, "Those teal didn't seem to like your looks."

"Cheer up," said I, "we got a couple that time and that's two better than nothing. What else did Carstairs say?"

"He said, 'Just tell anyone who tries to start anything, that you're getting off at Newton Center. Don't forget.'

"Soon after starting, after making the next stop, a big red-faced breaky stuck his head in the door and remarked: 'Hillo, my fine buck! is this your private car?'

"'Not on your life,' I said, 'I am only going down the line a little way.'

- "'Where do you get off?' he asked.
- "'At Newton Center,' said I.
- "'The hell you do,' said he, 'Who do you know on this line?'
 - "'Bill Carstairs,' said I.
- "'Oh, you're a friend of Bill, eh? If you're his friend, you're all right and that goes. Say; got any chewin'?'
- "The following afternoon my brakeman friend came into the car and told me the next stop ended his run and added, 'There's a pretty hard bunch of railroaders on the Los Angeles run. They have to be tough, so many bums are always trying to get east. But the pass is, "What's the distance from San Pedro to San Francisco?" Remember the two "Sans" or you will get kicked off the train.'
- "I took advantage of the next stop to round up a little eating shack and got some steak, fried spuds, and coffee. Crackers and cheese get tedious after a while.
- "Soon after the train started two breakies and the conductor came into the calaboose together.
- "'Hope you are enjoying a pleasant trip,' said the little fat breaky. 'Did the porter tuck you up comfortably last night, sonny?'
- "Say you,' said the conductor real rudely, 'who are you and where did you come from?'
- "Hold on a minute," said I, "just hear those geese—where are they?"
- "Right across the lake," answered Jimmy, "fairly low down. The first Canadas I've seen this fall; they came over the north mountains a few minutes agoprobably been flying for twenty hours and traveled over a thousand miles. They are thirsty and tired and want to bathe and rest, but they won't quit circling until sure that all is well and they can light in safety."

There was great honking and excitement, as the entire flock, after circling several times, found deep water and one by one dropped down heavily into it, sending the spray flying. I watched them through my field-glasses. They were very thirsty and when not drinking would bathe, sinking their bodies deep in the water, then sit bolt upright with their feathers all ruffled up as though hung out to dry.

"By crickey," said Jimmy, "those geese are about played out. Did you see how they came down? They were that tired they almost fell into the water. I'd just love to get a crack at them. Did I ever tell you about getting seven of those big chaps one morning last fall?"

"No," said I, "you never mentioned it."

"Well, it was this way: I was guiding a Denver sport and while rowing home one evening, I saw two bunches of Canadas in a small grassy place not over two miles from the shanty. Early next morning I started after them. I had my half dozen profile geese decoys set out while it was yet dark. There wasn't a bit of use to build a blind, it would only frighten them away. So I took a running jump into the tules edging the grassy place, leaving no break in the outside line for the geese to be suspicious about, and laid down. A bunch of eight, making very little noise, came in just after the first streak of dawn. It was almost too dark to shoot, but I raised up and gave them all six shells. You never heard such a commotion. I got three from the bunch."

"What did you do then?"

"Never stirred a finger, let the three lay where they fell and waited. Pretty soon I heard a great honking over the lake and saw a gang of a dozen coming my way.

I let out a couple of low toned 'Ah Unk's,' just enough to interest them into taking notice of the decoys. They came right over me, not over forty yards high. I nailed four more that time."

"That was great. Say, Jimmy; what is the chance of our getting a crack at them some morning?"

"I'll watch where they use," replied Jimmy, "and if there's a chance we'll give them a whirl. But say," said Jimmy, "I don't shoot geese with only two shells in my pump gun like I'm doing to-day on ducks."

When all was quiet again, I said to Jimmy, "How did you come out with your conductor friend?"

"Oh; I just told him I was going 'to California to see the flowers and orange groves. We don't have any where I live.' The conductor grabbed me by the collar and gave me a shake. 'Spit out your yarn quick now or I'll chuck you off.'

"If you do that,' said I, 'how can I measure the distance between San Pedro and San Francisco?'

"The conductor dropped my collar. 'Why didn't you say that in the first place? Who do you know up the line?'

"Bill Carstairs,' said I.

"'Oh," said the conductor, 'you're a friend of Carstairs are you? He's all right. I don't know him but he always passes my friends along. Well, just make yourself as comfortable as possible, this mountain run is pretty slow and rough. Say; got any chewin'?'

"California is all right," said Jimmy reminiscently, "provided you have money and can turn loose a dollar a day for expenses but I only had six bits in my jeans. That afternoon I got a job cuffing riding horses in a stable catering to tourists. At the end of a week, I never wanted to see another horse as long as I lived or

a tourist either. One night when eating dinner, a couple of fellows came in, sat at the same table, and we got acquainted. They were waiters on a steamboat running into San Francisco and I got a job waiting along with them.—

"Hush," said Jimmy, "keep down; a couple of spoonbills have dropped in behind us just inside the decoys. Look through the tules, there's a splendid chance for a double." I looked; they were swimming in the water but pretty wide of the decoys. The birds as usual were suspicious and watchful just after alighting. They saw me move and jumped high in air. I dropped the first bird but missed the second shot behind him. Instantly there was a roar like thunder in my ears. The duck I missed hit the water like a wet rag. Jimmy had fired his pump gun.

Nobody said anything. I lighted a cigar and then turned to Jimmy. "How did you know they were spoonbills and just a pair?"

"That's easy," said Jimmy. "I heard two birds light; they splashed down too heavy for teal and not strong enough for mallard. There's lots of spoonbills on the move to-day and that's why I called the turn." It sounded simple when you knew.

"A waiter sees lots of human nature," continued Jimmy thoughtfully. "People are either generous, moderate, or mean. You get a quarter, dime, or a thank you. About the third meal, the 'thank yous' get tepid coffee and all the drumsticks. Cigars were cash at the cigar counter. Say, now. Suppose some chap sitting at a table after dinner gave you a dollar to buy four cigars and said keep the change. What would you do?"

"Get four two bit cigars," said I promptly.

"It don't work out that way," replied Jimmy; "the

dagos buy four jitneys and put high-priced cigar bands on them that they have saved. They make eighty cents. Foreigners bring ten centers. Americans and the Irish buy two for a quarter and split the dollar fifty-fifty. It certainly takes all kinds of people to make a world," and Jimmy rolled and lighted a cigarette. "There was another thing I never told you about," he added.

"What was that?" I asked.

"Do you remember my saying to you last year that I couldn't eat a bite of beefsteak if it was the least bit pink inside? Up our way they cut a round steak a quarter of an inch thick and fry it in lard until the ends turn up.

"Well, us waiters when in port just like to go round to restaurants and watch other fellows waiting. One night six of us went into a bang-up place—none of your fifteen-cent meals. Steak was twenty cents and other truck was five cents a throw. We all ordered steak, fried spuds, pie, and coffee. Tom Meal, who ordered, said, 'steaks medium.' I didn't say anything.

"The steaks came; I cut mine open. It was pink inside. I cut off a piece, stuck my fork into it, shut my eyes, and crammed it in my mouth. By crackey! but it was good. I never really tasted steak before. Your dead right in liking medium cooked steak."

"Your learning all the time, Jimmy," said I, "there's nothing like traveling. You knock round with other fellows and soon get into new ways."

"That's right," said Jimmy, "but it certainly costs money to be rich, and do as you like, I found that out, but anyway I saved enough to buy a ticket and take a train for back home, even if I did ride in the smoker all the way."

"I think you had a mighty fine trip," said I, "but

it's getting late and there won't be much shooting from now on. Let's push for the shack and a hot dinner." As I spoke—Whish! Whish! Four ducks came in from behind, high up, over our heads.

"Mallards," whispered Jimmy, giving them the low feed call. The four heard it and turned two hundred yards out and circled in toward the decoys. They were very suspicious. Probably they saw us when they flew over. We were not as well hidden behind as in front. At fifty yards they turned back again. Jimmy's gun rattled and roared twice. A beautiful double. My duck was hit hard and hating to lose a wounded bird I gave him the other barrel; he flew gradually sagging downward and finally fell, three gunshots away, making a big splash in the water.

"Well," said Jimmy, "that skirmish ends the battle for to-day. Three down, two we get and one we pick up going home. That's twelve ducks for the day, count 'em, just one dozen. Huh; ain't that a gorgeous shoot. But what do you expect with only two shells in my gun? Let me put in six shells instead of two next time and I'll get you some ducks."

THE NORTH SHORE

"Up they rose with cry and clamor With a whir and beat of pinions Rose up from the reedy islands From the water flags and lilies."

Longfellow's Higwatha.

THERE was an unwritten law that no one should shoot on the North Shore early in the season. The native ducks needed the North Shore as a resting place and refuge. It was different when the Southern migration was on later in the fall, as the Northern birds were here to-day and gone to-morrow and could take care of themselves. It was early in November. The flight birds, canvasbacks, redheads, and blue-bills, were arriving in goodly numbers, so Jimmy and I decided to try our luck that day on the North Shore. Rowing was a pleasant exercise in the sharp biting wind, but four miles of it was plenty.

The blind was a boat blind, as wide and two thirds as long as our boat. It was made of dry tules, tied to a frame of willow wands that were stuck securely in the mud. As we rowed up, a slightly wounded mallard, hiding in the blind, started to fly. It was no trouble to down him. At the shot a damaged redhead swam out from the blind and scurried off. Jimmy tried to catch him but the redhead could swim too fast. I gave him another shell.

We had two birds to start with as we pushed the skiff into place for the day and covered the ends with tules. The blind was built at the opening of the season and the ducks were accustomed to seeing it. It was all right to hold the North Shore as a refuge for the home-raised birds early in October, but now the Northern flight was on, it made but little difference.

The North Lake was nearly round. Mountains, great heaps of almost barren volcanic rock, lined the north and east sides of the lake, giving an air of grandeur unusual to ordinary duck shooting surroundings. Northward was a dry country and our two fresh water lakes held out welcome and inviting inducements to stay awhile, to all wildfowl on their autumn migration.

After we put out the decoys and were fairly settled, Jimmy started to wade ashore to see some friend of his who lived a mile from the lake about buying a horse. It was very still and I could hear Jimmy's feet splashing in the water, until he nearly reached the bank. The boat I was shooting from was a very comfortable one with a swivel chair in the stern. A chair with a back and arms and better than all a comfortable cushion. Sitting there with the decoys in front of me, it was only necessary to turn the chair enough to suit conditions as each duck came to the decoys. It was really most luxurious.

With my field-glasses I could plainly see a black raft of ducks a mile west. They were flight ducks. Most of them had come in from the North during the night or early in the morning. They were tourists and tourists are always fair game. I hoped to see more of them a little later, if they proved sociable.

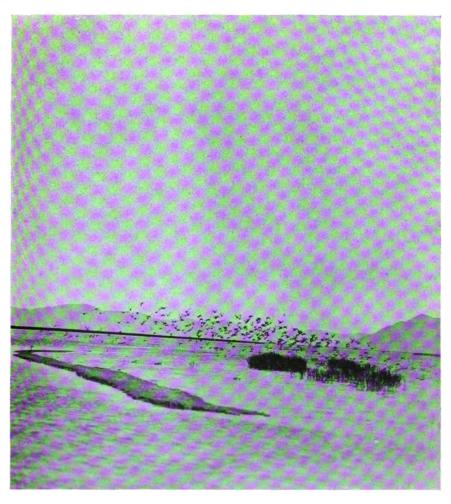
There were two guns in the boat, my time-scarred double and a new companion, an automatic, a recent acquisition. The recoil pad, while helping some, had not cured the double of a recoil, that not noticeable a

few years ago, was now a bit jarring. The prescription offered by the gun store man was "get an automatic or shoot a twenty gauge." I decided for the automatic.

Every duck that came around at first passed high over the blind and joined the raft of ducks towards the western shore. The first duck that noticed the decoys was a baldpate widgeon. He came bustling up like a policeman, all ready to run my bunch of ducks over to the big raft. He was full of importance, but I cut him down with the automatic at forty yards. The machinery of the automatic made quite a rattle and the empty shell whizzed out into the water, but there was no recoil.

Three small bunches of ducks passed up my decoys in favor of the big raft. My few decoys looked insignificant compared with the huge black bunch of moving and talking ducks beyond, but perhaps that could be remedied. There were twenty wooden decoys, mostly mallards. To make matters more attractive, I waded out in the three inches of water and shovel in hand turned up a hundred lumps of mud, the size of ducks. These with the twenty made a great showing to flying fowl. A bunch of seven blue-bills that were scouting around noticed my increased flock and came in to look things over. The automatic worked nicely. Three stayed behind.

Another waiting spell. It's always well to have lunch while it is quiet. Lunch was in a tightly covered tin pail. A quarter of apple pie, a piece of cake, and two roast beef sandwiches. Then a smoke. That cigar had a most unfortunate career. Every time I lighted it ducks came to the decoys. I felt very grateful to that cigar and cherished it carefully. But thrown hurriedly down so often it became battle scarred and ended its career wrapped in wet paper to hold it together.



"The big flock of canvasbacks was very wild and shy. They alighted in the water east of us, but kept rising and then alighting again. It was some time before they settled down"

Courtesy of Shiplers, Salt Lake City, Utah

The first match was hardly blown out when four canvasbacks came in a bee line straight for the decoys. The cigar fell in the bottom of the boat. I hardly was obliged to turn my chair an inch, as the ducks came head on in front of me. One dropped. Another wounded one started off, but I shot it again before it was under full headway.

Then came a quiet smoke. The ducks seemed to like plenty of decoys. I gathered my victims and stuck them up on sticks outside the mud decoys. A mallard went by, coming from behind. Again my cigar sought privacy in the bottom of the boat. I tuned up my mallard call. Mallards generally fly away when they hear it, but this time, wonder of wonders, at the first note he circled and came towards me. Then turning back, he circled once more and on curved wings swung around right over the decoys and with head moving from side to side watched my flock to see which one had offered greetings. It was impossible to miss him.

Suddenly I caught sight of a flock of ducks, flying with the wind, crossing the mountains to the north. They were canvasbacks. As I watched they came swooping down to the lake of fresh water. Seven other large following flocks crossed the mountains, one after the other. I thought a tremendous flight was on, and opened my shell box to count my shells. There were six small boxes of twenty-five each. The eight big flocks were very wild and shy. They alighted in the water east of me, but kept rising and then alighting again. It was some time before they settled down. With rafts of ducks on either side of the boat, the chances of a good shoot looked most propitious.

In about twenty minutes another flock, all redheads, came over the mountains. As it happened they were

the last to cross the mountains that day. The eight flocks probably came from the same locality. At any rate they hung together. The redheads were strangers. They circled the lake high in air, took a look first at the westward raft and then flew over and sized up the eastern bunch. Doubtful of joining forces with either, they saw my decoys, and decided on a middle course. Lowering fast in one great circle, they set their wings and headed in for the decoys. I threw my cigar stump recklessly away; it struck the water with a gentle hiss—perhaps that was what started my heart to pumping.

There were thirty redheads. It's easy to be cool when a single or a pair come within range, but thirty redheads all at once is different. I was excited. Three fell at the first cartridge. The redheads hit their fastest pace after the first shot. I yanked again at the trigger—there was no report. In my excitement I had forgotten to release the trigger of the automatic for a fraction of a precious instant. When I remembered and was ready to fire again the ducks were out of range. But I fired the four remaining shells as fast as I could, just for luck and to become accustomed to doing it.

Two of the redheads were easily retrieved, the third one flew nearly to the shore before he fell. Jimmy would see him when he returned so I did not go after him. I was dissatisfied with my redhead experience, but did not have long to worry over it as two spoonbills came in on my right side and alighted outside the decoys, forty yards from the boat. They were restless and ready to fly, but I managed to turn my chair without alarming them and stood up. The spoonbills flew instantly. The first one dropped at the end of his spring into the air. Remembering this time to release the trigger, I fired again. The second spoonbill was actively

climbing upwards but was still within range. He dropped at the shot but it took another shell to hold him.

Soon afterwards I saw Jimmy coming back. When he reached the lake and headed for the boat, I rose, waved my hat, and pointed. Jimmy turned, saw the duck, and picked him up. Jimmy brought good luck with him. It was long after noon when he returned and the ducks in the big raft were beginning to move. Unfortunately very few were coming our way. They had been resting or sleeping all the morning and now wanted to feed. As a rule they flew back of the blind and alighted in the open spaces away from all danger. A few pairs or small bunches of three to five came around the decoys often enough to make it interesting. Most of them that came over us were high up and almost out of range. It's very enjoyable to calculate just where to shoot at these highflyers and one hit in three is good work.

"Did you buy your horse?" I asked when Jimmy returned.

"No," he said, "I did not. He was a fine animal ten years ago but now he's too old for my work. What luck have you had with the ducks?"

"Pretty fair," I told him. "Did you notice the blind is right between two rafts of ducks?"

"Yes," said Jimmy, "I noticed that. We should get a good bag of big birds to-day; I saw lots of redheads and canvasbacks flying about—here come a couple of redheads now."

They came on rapidly until almost within shot, then circled round south of the blind and came over us as usual, high up. I had my double barrel; somehow I had more confidence in it—it was easier to sight and came up better, then again I was used to it.

"I'll take the head one," said Jimmy.

We both fired as one report. The head duck came down. My bird towered and as he went up I fired the other barrel. That ended his towering.

"That's a good start," said Jimmy, "two redheads. You know the duck pickers at the shack ask fifteen cents to pick redheads and canvasbacks."

"Why is that?" I asked.

"They have such a heavy coat of down under their feathers," replied Jimmy, "that it takes a long time to pick them. They pick all other kinds of ducks for three cents apiece."

"That strikes me," I said, "as being very curious; I never noticed the 'down' you speak about."

"I'll show you," said Jimmy, and he picked up the redhead he brought in, tore out a couple of handfuls of feathers, and showed me the warm cushion of soft down that clung to the body. It was thick and sticky and so short that it was difficult to pull out.

"Well! that's a new one on me," I said, "but they certainly look difficult to pick clean. How many pickers are there at the shack?"

"Two," said Jimmy. "When the guide brings in the boat, he lands the shooter at the wharf and then it's the guide's business to clean the ducks. It's mighty unpleasant work. There are plenty of big carp in the river around the shack, attracted by this cleaning business when the shooting season is on. When cleaned I take the ducks to the pickers' house. They pick them as clean as the palm of your hand."

"What becomes of all the ducks after they are picked?" I asked.

"Well, what do you think of that!" ejaculated Jimmy. Jimmy faced east and I was facing west. We were

supposed to guard the whole horizon and yet a duck had stolen in, on my side, as you have probably guessed, and alighted inside the decoys. I grabbed my double and stood up. The duck, strange to say a shy old cock pintail, as wily in retreat as he had been in advance, sprang high in air. I aimed my gun well over him and fired. At the instant of firing the pintail, instead of rising, dived downward and flew along the water as close as possible without getting his wings wet. It was irritating, but what can you expect sometimes? The second barrel was another perfect failure. How Jimmy did laugh; but I felt a grudging respect for the pintail's strategy as he flew away to safety.

"If we don't do any better than that," grinned Jimmy, "we wouldn't have any ducks to be picked at any price. Why that pintail was within twenty feet of you."

"Well, he isn't now," I said, "he's just gone and isn't coming back. Tell me, what is done with the ducks when they are picked?"

"It's against the law to ship ducks out of the State," replied Jimmy, "so they are mostly expressed to various hotels and restaurants in Salt Lake City and I suppose some tourist is the ultimate consumer. The money received goes to the credit of the general expense account of the shack."

"Ducks bring high prices in the Eastern cities," I said, just to see what Jimmy would answer.

"Of course," replied Jimmy, "if the birds could be shipped out of the State, the big prices—Don't move, there's a dozen blue-bills flying round behind us." I kept my head perfectly still; nine times out of ten it's moving your head that scares the ducks. In a moment I could see the blue-bills. There were

nine of them. On curved motionless wings they circled steadily lower until heading directly into the wind they came within range. We both fired together and probably at the nearest bird. We pasted him in great shape. Then each got one with the second shell. They were still within easy range and I longed for the automatic as it was possible to get in another shot. But of course it was too late, they were out of range almost instantly.

"Three blue-bills down," said Jimmy. "Blue-bills are prettier shooting than they are eating."

"How so?" I asked. "Aren't they as good eating as mallards?"

"No indeed," Jimmy answered, "mallards are fine eating ducks. Blue-bills are smaller than mallards—they are not much larger than spoonbills—and they always seemed to me pretty dry."

"All ducks are dry the way they are generally cooked out here," I said. "Now I suppose you will tell everybody I said that, and I'll become anything but a general favorite."

"How would you cook these old ducks then? Our way is all right. We parboil them to make them tender and then brown them nicely in the oven. Can you beat that way of cooking?"

"Well, I will frankly say it's possible I might."

"How would you go about it?" Jimmy asked.

"It's very simple: the first thing to do is to hang the ducks by their necks for a week or ten days in a cool place."

"Why do you do that?" asked Jimmy.

"You boil them to make them tender. In that way the flesh of the duck is tender in twenty minutes, but all the wild flavor of the duck is boiled away in the water. Hanging ducks up a week or ten days in a cool place makes the flesh tender without losing its flavor."

"Wouldn't you boil them at all?" asked Jimmy.

"No," I replied, "roasting is the way to cook them, about twenty-five minutes with a good hot fire for a mallard and a little less for smaller ducks. To my idea the teal is the finest eating duck of any of them, though I like teal best broiled."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Jimmy. "We can shake hands and agree on one thing anyway. I like teal best too."

As he finished speaking a duck whizzed by within fifteen feet of Jimmy's end of the boat blind. Neither of us had noticed its approach. Taken by surprise, Jimmy hurriedly let go at it. The shot sent the duck hurtling sideways half a dozen feet.

"Oh! darn," said Jimmy "that duck nearly scared the life out of me and I returned the compliment and scared him to death." I walked out and picked up the unfortunate victim. One wing was gone and the whole side of the duck's body driven in. I brought the remains to the boat and said to Jimmy, "I'm just a bit prejudiced against massacring a duck like that, it's too sudden an ending."

"He certainly didn't get much of a show for his white alley," grinned Jimmy, "all he's good for now is to make duck soup."

Another wait and I filled my pipe and lighted a match when Jimmy whispered, "Keep down," and pointed south. They looked like big ducks and I was not surprised when Jimmy said, "Canvasbacks!" It starts the thrills to sit still and watch a big flock of canvasbacks in the offing. It was doubtful if they would come our way. Still there was hope as long as they were in the

air. Once they found a place to suit and alighted in the water our chance for a shot was over. Again they circled, coming a trifle nearer. Jimmy gave them the mallard feed call. They half circled once more and then came directly over us all scattered out, high in air. They had no apparent intention of coming closer and Jimmy gave the word, "Now." Four shots rang out. It really looked like a miss at first, then one crumpled in the air and fell. Two others seemed in trouble; one of them gave up suddenly and came down like a stone, while the other fell on a long slant too far out to chase after. The first cripple we had lost that day. I hate to lose cripples.

I lighted another match and started my pipe while Jimmy trudged off after the farthest canvasback. He wasn't over a hundred yards away when three spoonbills started up from the western raft of ducks and headed straight for the decoys. They evidently came on business. Not a single turn or circle did they make but came in handsomely over the farthest decoys. The double gun spoke twice and dropped a right and left. The first shot was at a slow flying bird getting ready to alight. The second bird was a fast quarterer. Jimmy looked round and waved his hat when he saw the ducks falling.

The bunch of redheads and canvasbacks east of us, frightened by the shooting, made off, without our getting a shot at them. They got away while we were busy shooting, without our even seeing them go. The big raft toward the west was disintegrating rapidly. The ducks were flying southwest towards Land's End, a distant section of the marsh where few shooters went, it was so far away. Nothing more came to our decoys for some time. We could only sit quietly and

keep a careful watch. Watchful expectation occupies most of the time anyway in duck shooting.

At last two mallards came over high up. looked far out of shot, but it was dull business sitting there doing nothing so I resolved to chance it. The mallards were flying side by side, the drake turning his head now and then, evidently looking at my decoys. I aimed at the nearest bird—it was a brown duck, the female; instantly shifting my aim at the drake I let go and down he came. As he struck the water, he seemingly found the fountain of life and springing into the air, he soared away as though nothing had happened. My gun was open for a new cartridge; closing it quickly and bringing the gun to my shoulder I fired again. was more of a snap shot than is usual in duck shooting, but the duck stopped right where he was. Immy grudgingly admitted it was a fair shot, but that was as far as he would go.

"What more can I say?" said Jimmy finally; "you only grazed the duck's head with a single shot; you stunned him for an instant, but he was topside up the moment he hit the cold water. If you had killed him when high up in the air it would have been one thing, but you only knocked him down and had to reshoot him. I don't call that a good shot." We talked it over for some time but Jimmy would not admit the shot was a good one even then.

A big flock of the larger shore birds went sailing by. Jimmy watched them with interest; at last he said, "What's the difference between a jacksnipe and a Wilson snipe?"

"Do you know a jacksnipe," I asked, "when you see one?"

"Why of course I do," replied Jimmy.

The shore birds instead of alighting had turned and flew back by us again.

"There," said Jimmy pointing at a big marbled godwit, "there's your jacksnipe."

I had to laugh. Then I said, "You wouldn't call my high shot at the mallard drake a good one, now I don't agree that marble godwit you're pointing at is a jack-snipe."

Jimmy got quite indignant: "Why, that's a jacksnipe, I've seen jacksnipe all my life. I just know that's one."

"Not at all, Jimmy," I said, "you're dead wrong. That is a shore bird snipe all right enough, but it's not a jacksnipe. There is no difference anyway between a jacksnipe and a Wilson snipe, they're only different names for the same bird."

"Why, nothing of the sort," said Jimmy. "I see jacksnipe flying round and wading in the water every day."

"You're wrong again," I told him, "jacksnipe don't wade in the water. They live in grassy muddy places. They have a long bill and when they fly up, they cry 'scape,' 'scape.'"

"Oh! are those things jacksnipe? We call them wigglewagglers round here, they dodge round so when they first start to fly. Well, I declare, are those things jacksnipe? I never knew that before."

We stayed in the blind longer than usual that evening in hopes of getting a few more shots. It was getting late. The sun was close to the western rim and the shadows were long reflections in the water. Suddenly I heard a new note. Jimmy heard it too and as he turned partly around I could see his knuckles whiten as he tightly grasped his gun. It was the sound that

gladdens the heart of the goose hunter,—the cry of the Canada goose. It came clear but a trifle querulous from the heavens. A V-shaped flock of these Northern visitors had crossed the mountains from the north. Many high-pitched voices succeeded the first clear note. They had seen the lake. They were arguing among themselves. Should they alight and rest on the longed-for water? The flock lowered, swinging in a half circle. They were excited and garrulous, undecided. Suddenly a clear note rang out. The leading goose dropped back. Another goose swept forward to the vacant place at the front of the V-shaped double column. Again a single high clear note took the place of the former undecided ones.

The flock stiffened, rose higher, and on steady pinions headed southward for the Gulf. A new commander was in charge.

JOHN'S ISLAND

"A rustle of wings from over there
Where all night long on watery bed
The flocks have slept—and the morning air
Rings with messengers of lead."

"It's an awfully pretty day," said Jimmy. "Where do you think we had better go to get a good shoot?"

It was a fine day, too fine apparently for good shooting, but we were bound to go somewhere and try.

"They say a big flight of green-winged teal came in yesterday. I've heard for the last ten years that John's Island was the best place for teal on the marsh; what do you say to trying it there to-day?"

"Huh!" said Jimmy in a disgusted way, "nobody shoots at John's Island now, nobody's shot there for years. It's high and dry. What's the good of going there?"

"Where do you want to go?" I asked.

"Over on the North Shore," said Jimmy promptly, "that's the place to-day."

"You said the south point sink box was the place yesterday and we only shot fifteen ducks," I answered. "No, we'll try John's Island to-day; I have a hunch we'll get a good shoot on teal. What's the best way to get there?"

"It's twenty minutes' walk across the marsh," answered Jimmy, "or a good hour's row round by the river. We have so much to carry I guess I better get the boat,

but I'll bet you a dollar you don't shoot ten ducks on John's Island to-day."

"You're on," I said; "that's a good bet for you to lose."

We were standing on the dock, guns, shell box, rubber coat, and lunch in a heap ready to pack in the boat. Jimmy brought in the skiff and we started for John's Island, but we never got there.

"Who was John?" asked Jimmy as we paddled along with the current down river, "and why is it called John's Island?"

"John was one of the guides here fifteen years ago. Not many people came down here then, it was a hard place to get to. When I first drove down in 1899 it seemed as though we were going to the jumping-off place. John was a fine shot and one of the best guides to find birds on the marsh, but he was a little too quiet for most people. There were more guides than sportsmen in those days and John had plenty of idle time on his hands."

"What did John have to do with his island?" asked Jimmy.

"Oh, John used to sit on the dock and see all the sportsmen start out; when they were all gone, he would walk over to the little island, named after him because he nearly always shot there. When the sportsmen returned with fifteen or twenty ducks John would be sitting on the dock grinning with a pile of fifty to seventy-five ducks beside him, mostly teal."

"How did John manage it?" Jimmy asked.

"It was just a case of the farther away the greener the hill. The sportsmen went three to five miles hoping for a big shoot. John went half a mile from the house to his island and generally found plenty of ducks. John used to say, 'When I can't average a teal for every shell I'll quit shooting'; he often got three or more teal at a shot and that helped his average. He rarely shot more than three hours, but he knew how to call ducks. I always liked John."

"Well," said Jimmy, "I've seen that two-by-four John's Island; there's just room enough for a blind on it. If you take a step anywhere straight away from the blind your foot hits either the mud or the water, when there's enough water to cover the mud." We were rowing along a little beyond the mouth of the overflow or drainage river that ran from the main river to the North Lake when I noticed two bunches of teal take a short cut across the sandbar towards John's Island. Looking out in the middle of the lake I saw a great black raft of ducks sitting there. "Hold on a minute," I said.

"What's the matter now, got another hunch?" asked Jimmy.

"That's it exactly. We'll make our blind right by that heap of driftwood on the sandbar."

"All right," said Jimmy, "that suits me, I don't care about rowing any farther than I have too."

Jimmy rowed ashore, stood up in the boat, and looked around.

"Jerusalem! I have been rowing with my back towards that raft of ducks out there, never even saw them. Say! I'll bet your eyes hit that bunch of fowl when you had that 'hunch' of yours to stop here. We're going to get a shoot to-day, sure pop."

After the guns and stuff were all landed Jimmy rowed away towards the nearest tules to hide the skiff. It was nearly half a mile and Jimmy had a long wade through the mud coming back. Meanwhile I dug a

couple of "Nevada" blinds, two pits side by side each deep enough to hold comfortably a pair of number ten rubber boots from the knees down. We sat on the sand, with our feet in the "Nevada" blinds, a few sticks from the heap of driftwood stuck up around us. The blind was low down and well hidden.

When Jimmy got back he had a bunch of old dried tules with him, just the thing to scatter lightly among the sticks around our blind. A solid looking blind that stands out from its natural surroundings is soon spotted and avoided by wild fowl.

"Well!" said Jimmy throwing down his bunch of tules, "you owe me a dollar."

"How is that?" I asked.

"You bet a dollar that you would shoot ten ducks at John's Island to-day and now you're not even going there."

"You're right," I replied. "The dollar is yours. Now I'll bet you a bottle of beer against your dollar that we get fifty ducks here to-day and if we get that many ducks I'll give you a bottle of beer anyway."

"Hold on a bit," said Jimmy, "I want to get all that through my head. I took in a circus last summer and lost one big cartwheel on some such roundabout talk, like that you made just now."

"How did that happen?" I asked.

"Oh, everybody round here goes to the circus whenever they get a chance. I went early and was poking round when I came across a nice stylish-looking chap playing with three shells and a little pea. He looked round and saw me and said:

- "'See what a feller gave me just now.'
- "'What is it?' said I.
- "'It's the new game of Hide and Seek,' he said.

'Now you watch me and see if you can tell where the pea is.'

"The stylish chap made a lot of motions with his hands and stuck down his three shells on a little table.

"'Which one is the pea under?' he says.

"I touched one of the shells; he lifted it up and there was the pea.

"Bet you can't do that again,' says he.

"I guessed right again.

"Bet you two dollars you can't do that again,' said the stylish chap in a peeved manner.

"I didn't like to say so," remarked Jimmy thought-fully, "but I knew where the pea was and I just thought I would teach the stylish chap a lesson; but I didn't do it, the pea wasn't there. I lost two plunks quicker than you can wink.

"The feller threw the shells round again and I saw him stick the pea under the middle shell.

"'Come on,' said the stylish feller, 'want to try another two dollars Rube?'

"'My name ain't Rube' says I, 'it's James.'

"'Oh! excuse me . . . 'Watch out," whispered Jimmy, "there's a big bunch rising from that raft of ducks out there; they may settle back again, though mebbe they'll come this way. Say! They're coming!"

I peeked over the blind; a regular mob of teal, at least a hundred, were coming. Our decoys were put out just right, in the shape of a half moon. One end narrowed up close to the blind, the other end narrowed up forty yards out in the water. The decoys were the thickest in the center space of the half moon. The ducks as they were headed would have passed a hundred yards away. But they saw the decoys and veered in until they were only thirty yards outside of the farthest

decoys. They were all green-wings. Jimmy gave two or three imitations of the teal's whistle. The bunch turned and came straight for us. When they reached the outside point of the decoys I rose to shoot. The teal saw me and as one bird they whirled towards the sandbar. As they whirled, in the excitement I let go both barrels together and raked the bunch from end to end.

"Did the gun kick?" asked Jimmy, when I failed to fire the second barrel. "I thought perhaps from the big boom your old gun made that you fired both barrels together."

"I didn't notice any kick," I replied, "but both barrels went off together all right. We've made a good start for those fifty ducks, eh? See if you can get those cripples." There were four cripples paddling off in different directions. Jimmy got them all but had to reshoot two of them. "There are four more dropped scattering along the sandbar behind the blind," said Jimmy; "I'll go after them."

When all set for another shot, we had a little pile of sixteen teal piled up back of the blind.

"Jimmy," said I, "if we get sixteen teal with four shells, how many teal will we get with a hundred shells?"

"Oh, quit your arithmetic," answered Jimmy, "I never was any good at that old stuff."

"Did the stylish fellow laugh when you told him your name was James?" I asked.

"Yes, a little," answered Jimmy. "He told me he had a dear friend named Reuben and that I looked so much like him that he really forgot for a minute when he called me Rube; he apologized real handsome. Just then another chap came up, looked the game over, and bet a five dollar bill. I thought sure he would win

because I saw the pea under the shell the chap bet on, but he lost all the same. After the chap that lost the five dollars had cussed a little and walked away, I said to the stylish feller:

""What do you do with all the money you win?"

"'Oh,' he said, 'I am an assistant treasurer of the Y. M. C. A. and all the money I take in goes to them, except of course my actual expenses.' I was certainly surprised to hear that, but then I remembered that these charitable institutions are always begging for money.

"Well, I jogged along to see what else I could find and two or three tents away I saw a chap throwing three cards on a small table. One card had a big cross on the back of it. He dropped this card by mistake and I saw it was the ace of hearts. Then he chucked all three cards down on the table and said— . . . Here come two teal, right north, close in!" exclaimed Jimmy. I rose and fired both barrels; one bird fell, the other darted upward so fast he beat me to it. I shot under him although I aimed four feet over him.

"Where was I?" asked Jimmy.

"Where the chap asked you to pick up the ace of hearts," I answered.

"How did you know that?" asked Jimmy in a surprised tone of voice. "I never told you, but that was just what he did say."

"And what did you answer," I asked.

"'Oh!' I said, 'I can pick up the ace of hearts. I'll go you a dollar. I can do it, my middle name is Rockyfeller,' and I laid my dollar down on the table.

"All right,' he says. 'Let's see you pick up the ace of hearts now!'

"I turned over the card I saw him drop and it was the ace of hearts all right.

"You're a real smart financeer,' said the chap. 'You've made a hundred per cent on your money,' and he handed out two dollars; I felt pretty smart too just then."

"I'll bet you did," I said. "What happened next?"

"Well, a lot of the crowd standing round, looking on, knew me and when they saw me pocket those two dollars a bunch of them began to try their luck betting. In less than five minutes that card chap won twenty-seven dollars. Not one of them could turn over that ace of hearts again. Do you know how he did it?" asked Jimmy.

"I might make a good guess," I answered.

"I've often wondered," said Jimmy, "how that chap could throw down an ace of hearts, marked on the back with a big cross, and when you picked it up you found the ten of clubs in your hand. Can you explain that?"

"Why, yes," I said, "he had an ace of hearts and a dozen other cards, all marked alike with a big cross on their backs."

"How did he change them there, right before my eyes?" asked Jimmy.

"He had practiced that, that's where his little game came in. You were going up against another man's sure thing."

"I kind of guessed it was something like that," said Jimmy. "Anyway I didn't bet any more, just hung onto my money and looked on. Pretty soon when they found they couldn't win anything the crowd moved off. When they had gone, I said to the card chap, 'Are you an assistant treasurer of the Y. M. C. A. too?'

"He gave me a queer look and then said, 'No, I'm the treasurer for the company that's putting bibles in every room of all the hotels in the land."

"'That's a mighty good thing too,' says I as I walked away. When I got off half a gun shot, I just felt somebody was looking at me. Turning round I saw that card chap watching me with a big grin on his face. What do you suppose he was laughing at?—

"Look out beyond the decoys," whispered Jimmy. I had been so interested in Jimmy's story that I had nearly forgotten our shooting—but I looked. There stood a big tall Hutchins brant, a miniature of the Canada goose,—he looked big and tall to me anyway,—just outside the farthest decoys. He was looking suspiciously at the blind with his head stuck up in the air as high as it could reach. As I stood up the brant rose, darting upwards like a teal.

"Shoot at its head!" yelled Jimmy, "you only have number seven shot." I shot four feet ahead of its bill and heard the shot rattle against his body, then I aimed six feet ahead. The brant started on a long downward slide and fell a hundred yards away. Jimmy went out and picked him up.

"He counts as one goose," said Jimmy, "but he's pretty thin. Guess he was a cripple. I never knew a good healthy goose to act that way before."

"Well," said I after the goose was placed safely behind the blind, "that's one more goose than I expected to shoot to-day. Where do you suppose he came from, Jimmy?"

"From outdoors somewhere. That goose surely was a mysterious beggar to come poking in here that way and nobody either saw or heard him coming."

"Well," said I, "he came and now he's going to stay. How did you enjoy the circus?"

"The finest ever," said Jimmy; "the big tent had just opened for the show and I thought I had better go in,

see the animals, and then get a good seat. As I walked up to the entrance who should I see but Hulda with her pa and ma. Hulda had on a white dress and a pink ribbon round her waist, with the two ends hanging most down to the ground behind. Her cheeks were pink too and her blue eyes shining. I tell you she was a peacherino all right.

"''Lo, Hulda,' said I, 'want to go with me and see the show?'

"So we took in . . . Don't shoot," said Jimmy, "those are only fish ducks; they're mighty swift flyers, but you can't eat them, too tough and fishy." The five fish ducks passed by the blind, flying like streaks, their sharp-pointed bills showing up plainly as they went by.

"It was a three-ring circus," said Jimmy, "something going on in every ring all the time. Did you ever see a single teal light down close to the blind and start feeding, twisting this way and picking up something and then turning the other way, never still a minute? Well that's the way Hulda did, trying to see the show in all three rings at the same time."

"Did you see everything too?" I asked.

"You bet I did," Jimmy said; "I bought popcorn, peanuts, and red lemonade and saw everything in all three rings. The funniest thing in the show was a clown that played a game of baseball all by his lone-some. He was umpire, catcher, pitcher, and all the rest of the nine. I never laughed so much before."

"What did Hulda like best?"

"Hulda? Oh! she liked the barebacked horseback riding best, where a girl turned somersaults through a paper hoop. I had seen all that before but Hulda thought it was wonderful."

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It was noon. The ducks in the big raft were getting uneasy. Those in the rear would start up in little bunches, fly over all the rest of the ducks, and light down again in front. They were approaching nearer our blind every time they did this. Teal like to get on a sandbar in the middle of the day, to preen their feathers and take a nap in the sun. There were a good many loose feathers scattered over the sand behind us and the teal evidently were accustomed to roost there in the middle of the day.

It was warm and still, no one was shooting anywhere near, and only three parties of three each, the sportsman and his two guides, were shooting on the entire marsh. We would hear a shot now and then, but no one seemed to be having much success. A bunch of seven teal rose from the raft of ducks but instead of alighting again, they kept right on, heading straight for us. They came on rapidly and strangely enough rose high in air to cross the sandbar. They looked so small that, thinking they were out of shot, I lowered my gun, when Jimmy velled, "Shoot! shoot quick! they're within range, give it to 'em!" They were coming fast against the wind; aiming twenty feet ahead I fired. The chance to hit anything looked hopeless but the two leaders staggered in their flight and then fell. I was so surprised I did not even fire my other barrel, but watched the birds falling.

Jimmy laughed. "Anyone would think you were a greenhorn at shooting ducks. Why didn't you fire your second barrel instead of standing staring at them? The bunch was within shot."

"We got a couple anyhow," I said, "and that's two more than I expected. The birds looked far out of range."

"High birds are always deceptive; how high did you think those were?"

"At least a hundred yards," I answered, "and I was so surprised to see two drop that I never thought of my second barrel."

"That bunch was only fifty yards high, but—watch out," whispered Jimmy, "here come five more." I watched out and that was all I did do. The teal came on in fine shape but seemed again far out of range. Thinking to have the laugh on Jimmy I whispered, "You shoot." Jimmy threw his pump gun to his shoulder and fired instantly. One bird with wings widely outstretched struck a slow corkscrew spiral coming down, finally hitting the sandbar behind us, and lay still.

"Thought I couldn't hit 'em, eh? Didn't care to waste a shell yourself, but thought I would miss and you could give me the horse laugh. Well, someone got fooled that time."

"I don't blame you for swelling up a little over that shot," I said, "it was a mighty fine one. What made you feel so sure the teal were within range?"

"I never used to shoot at those high birds until lately," answered Jimmy; "always thought, just as you do now, that they were out of range. But this summer I was down in Salt Lake City looking at a skyscraper building they were putting up there when a couple of pigeons flew over the building and I got to wondering just how high the pigeons were. I knew they were pigeons, but they looked so small they seemed more like sparrows than pigeons."

"How did you figure it out?" I asked.

"Oh! I waltzed up and asked one of the carpenters working there how high the building was. He said a hundred and thirty feet. The pigeons were about

100

twenty feet higher than the building. That would make the pigeons only fifty yards high."

"That sounds all right, but how did it work out in practice?"

"Didn't you see just now how fine it worked out in practice when that teal came down?" replied Jimmy. "There's lots of shots that look far out of range when the ducks are not really over fifty or sixty yards high. Here comes a bunch now!"

Another small flock of teal came over and again they looked far out of shot. Probably I looked a little dubious and gave no sign of shooting when Jimmy whispered, "Shoot now!" I raised the gun, lined up the flock, threw the gun twenty feet ahead, and this time I fired both barrels. Of course it was largely guesswork but one teal fell like a stone.

"What did I tell you?" said Jimmy in a triumphant tone. "Just think of all the high shots you've passed up all these years. Don't let these high-flying birds get your goat again."

"That's just it," said I, "they're flying too high, let's try to get them down a little."

"Well, if teal want to fly high," inquired Jimmy, "how can we get them to fly lower?"

"We haven't tried yet," I said; "suppose we stick up all our teal twenty yards back of the blind on the sandbar, maybe that will draw them down."

"It's a good idea," said Jimmy. "It may fool 'em."

Our twenty-one teal put up a nice show on the sandbar. Jimmy set them out so that they looked perfectly natural and seemed to be enjoying themselves to the limit. Most of them were resting, some even with their heads under their wings; while three or four stood a little away from the main bunch, as though sentinels on guard.



Two limits of teal. A limit is twenty-five ducks. Photographs are only taken on days like this



The Duckville Duck Club near the mouth of Bear River
Note the crow's nest or lookout for ducks on the roof

I congratulated Jimmy on his art in setting out the teal decoys and it is an art to do this properly. We had no more trouble after that. The quick eyes of the flying teal would see their comrades quietly resting on the warm sand. All idea of passing up such a good thing and flying over high up into the bay beyond was forgotten. They flew lower, and coming in against the wind, were flying slower when passing the blind, getting ready to alight among their old friends.

Jimmy kept score with a bit of a pencil on a paste-board shell box. Inside of an hour when the flight stopped he announced we had twenty-seven teal, making our total score forty-eight. Twenty-five ducks to the man was the legal limit and I held to the limit. Twenty-five ducks a day is a good shoot and surely enough for anyone.

"Look at that," called Jimmy, pointing at a lone mallard drake that was flying directly over our first set of decoys. The only mallard we had seen that day—I longed to get him. Taking quick aim I fired. Nothing happened; then with more careful aim I fired again. The duck simply turned his head and seemed to look derisively back at us.

"Shoot! Jimmy! Shoot!" I called as a last resort. Jimmy was laughing, but his gun came up. I saw his arms momentarily tighten and his shoulder jerk back as the gun fired. It was a long shot but the mallard fell with a broken wing.

Jimmy started out after him; the mallard was sixty yards away and could swim in the water as fast as Jimmy could plow through it. Again and again Jimmy's gun cracked, but a swimming duck low in the water is a small mark at sixty yards. Jimmy had but one more shell left, when he suddenly splashed into a run.

sending the mud and water in every direction, but he gained ten yards on the duck. Then he fired and I saw the mallard turn over and wave two yellow legs in the air, as though beckoning to Jimmy to come and get him.

"Too much chase for too little bird," said Jimmy when he came back, "but I got mad with that old mallard and was just bound to have him. It hardly paid though as here I am all wet, with one of my rubber boots full of water. That's forty-nine anyway. One more victim and we start for home."

We got settled in the blind again and Jimmy drank all the water we had left. He was warm after his chase. Not a duck appeared in sight for fifteen minutes.

"Do you suppose," asked Jimmy, "that that miserable mallard passed the word round among the teal to boycott us?"

"It looks a little that way," I answered, "but I see three coming now." Three pair of wings were waving far out over the water that gradually changed as they came nearer into the full rounded outline of living birds. They bunched up nicely as they came into the decoys and I dropped two with one barrel.

"Well," said Jimmy, "you've busted the law, we have fifty-one ducks."

"How could I help it? I only shot at one duck and the other flew into it, was that my fault? Then we also have that goose and that makes fifty-two."

"Oh, the goose don't count, he just committed suicide," replied Jimmy; "but I don't believe you'll have to go to jail for one teal and that one killed by mistake."

"I'm real glad to hear you say so," said I with a smile, "you take an enormous weight off my mind. I'm going to have a smoke."

"Don't smoke now," said Jimmy. "Let's pick up the ducks, first, and then start back. You'll have to smoke in the river going home, the mosquitoes were fierce last night."

We reached the shack all right and glad to get there. It was a warm evening, the mosquitoes were out in full force on the river, and each one had a sting sharper than the last one. I smoked hard and fast but as Jimmy said, the mosquitoes seemed to like my brand of tobacco.

On the dock I said to Jimmy, "We're square on our dollar bets, but I owe you a bottle of beer."

"You mean," said Jimmy, "you owe me a dollar and a bottle of beer."

"How do you make that out?" I asked.

"Well! you owe me the dollar for not killing ten ducks at John's Island and you promised me the bottle of beer."

"Yes," I said, "but how about the dollar you lost betting we would not get fifty birds to-day?"

"You mean you offered to bet, but don't you remember I told you I'd have to think about it first and then I started off telling you about the circus? I lost a dollar there but your dollar squares that up. I had my eyeteeth cut all right last summer at that circus."

"The card chap and the stylish shell man might beat you at their game," said I in a bland tone of voice, "but I'll bet you could beat them at your game."

"And what game is my game?" asked Jimmy indignantly.

"Shooting ducks," said I. Jimmy grinned.

THE MUD QUEEN

"Plying in great flocks, like arrows
And in long lines, waving, bending
Like a bow-string snapped asunder
Came the white geese, Wawa-wawa,
From their wanderings in the Northland."

LONGFELLOW'S Hiawatha.

THERE'S too much furniture in most bedrooms. My bedroom at the shack contained only a most comfortable bed and a row of nails on the opposite wall. It was a most equitable arrangement. I could lie in bed and see all my valued and treasured possessions in shooting raiment, hung in a row. At home these same garments are banished to the attic and every spring and fall threats are made that the old clothes man will get them. It never disturbs me however because I know that no old clothes man would even take them for a gift. Who ever heard of new shooting clothes. The real things are always old and faded, patched and stained. Then and only then do they reach close to their owner's heart.

It was our good fortune to go to and from the hunting ground in the Mud Queen that day. The Mud Queen was a long narrow hunting skiff with the heart of a Ford. The Ford car had long since bid adieu to the world, but the engine still beat true. The Mud Queen hunting skiffs are made along the same lines but a little stronger and larger than the regular rowing skiffs. They are



Regulation two-pair-oar shooting skiff



The aeroplane boat going five miles an hour



The Mud Queen making hen tracks in the mud
Our Boats

twenty-nine feet long and three feet wide. A few feet from both bow and stern the side lines begin to come together, tapering to a point at both ends of the boat. When used as rowboats they are arranged with outriggers for double scull rowing. The boats are flat bottomed and draw but little water, but for all their narrow draft they are remarkably seaworthy.

The engine in the Mud Queen was arranged amidships and was set up in the boat exactly as in the original Ford car. The engineer sat a little forward of the center of the boat and started and stopped the engine by a hand lever. The power was carried to a paddlewheel on each side of the boat exactly as carried to the hind wheels of the Ford car. The paddles were small squares of steel, as the toughest wood was not strong enough to stand the work. Under full headway in the deep water of the river the Mud Queen went about as fast as two men rowing. But when the steel paddles struck and gripped the soft slick mud in the lake, covered by an inch or two of water, the boat raised itself a trifle and sprang forward like a spirited horse feeling the spur. A distance that two men rowing covered in an hour and a half the Mud Queen made easily in twenty-five minutes.

The boat ran freely on both mud and water but whenever it struck a sandbar and the sand began to grate on the bottom of the boat, it came to a full stop. The captain and crew on such occasions had to pull up the tops of their rubber boots, get overboard, and push the boat off.

There was no rudder. Any rudder that projected far enough into the water to steer the boat could never stand the hard knocks of running on the sandbars. Jimmy steered with an oar, while I sat on a high box in front and played at being engineer. The engineer's duties are not at all arduous.

"This seafaring life is the life for me," laughed Jimmy. "This is fun and rowing is hard work. I once wanted to enlist in Uncle Sam's Navy," he added; "always thought I'd like to be an Admiral, but two years ago I met an old sailor and what do you think he told me?"

"I'm sure I don't know," I answered.

"Well, sir, would you believe it, he told me an Admiral had his own suite of rooms, his own dining room, even his own waiters, and no one can speak to an Admiral on board ship unless the Admiral speaks to him first; what do you think of that?"

"It does not sound very sociable," I said.

"I should say it didn't," said Jimmy. "My friend was a bo'sun's mate. He always had the bo'sun to talk to any way. He said they had rowing matches, caught sharks, and such as that and had lots of fun. Everybody spoke to each other in the crowd he was with. I guess a bo'sun's mate has a better time than the Admiral, but I don't believe he draws down quite as much coin every month."

I took my hand off the lever and the boat stopped. "Let's get our bearings," I said, "and decide where to shoot to-day. Just exactly where are we?"

"We're about half a mile south of the Dinkelspeil sink box or about four miles from the shack," answered Jimmy. "Jack, the head guide, said there was a sink box around here somewhere." Jimmy stood up on my high seat, took my field-glasses, and looked around. "There's the sink box," he said; "we are quite a ways east of it. Start up your engine and we'll be there in three minutes." It wasn't more than three when I

brought my sidewheeler to a standstill in front of the sink box. It was full of water.

"We will have to bail a lot if we shoot here to-day," said Jimmy.

"Possibly," I said, "but Jack told me all three of the sink boxes down this way were new ones that have had plenty of time to swell tight. Once the water is bailed out we will probably have little trouble."

"I'll bail it out," replied Jimmy, "and then we'll see."

The sink box was three feet wide, four feet long, and three feet six inches deep, sunk in the mud with the tops projecting two inches above the water. When a little mud is thrown around this projection, the top appears to be on the level of the water. Sitting down on a camp stool or shell box in the sink box, the shooter is hidden from the ducks, unless they fly directly over him.

Once bailed out the sink box proved fairly dry. It made about eighteen inches of water every hour and we had to do a little bailing that often. Standing up in the boat I looked west. Half a mile away was a tremendous raft of ducks. The water was black with them. Jimmy saw them too.

"There they are," whispered Jimmy after the first look. "They're migratory birds, we must put out a lot of decoys to-day."

"Why so?" I asked.

"Why," said Jimmy, "don't you see that big black raft of ducks? Migratory birds see these big bunches of their own kind and decoy naturally to them. They would not look at our twenty wooden decoys, but they will come to a big bunch all right."

"How many mud decoys do you think we should have?" I asked.

"Oh, about a hundred," answered Jimmy. "I'll

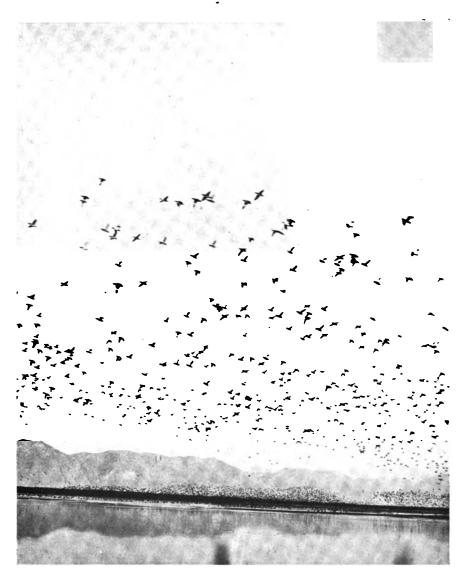
string them out in a long line south of the sink box, that should bring them in. Then when we shoot some, we will stake them out too."

"I think that's a fine plan," I said. "It always seemed to me that dead birds, staked out naturally, brought the best results."

Jimmy soon had the mud decoys in place with our twenty floating wooden decoys outside of them. Then I got into the sink box and sat down on my canvas stool. Everything certainly looked favorable for a good shoot. A little wind was coming in moderate gusts, with symtoms of more breeze later on. Plenty of ducks were in sight and it was sure they would fly a little later and I was hopeful it would be in our direction.

"You had better push the boat close inshore and stick an oar in the mud and tie the boat to it," I said to Jimmy, "and then come back and we will shoot together to-day."

Jimmy was only halfway to his destination when two widgeon came flying low down over the water towards I did not know the widgeon call so I sat perfectly still. They saw the decoys fortunately and came on without the slightest hesitation. The wind was east. The widgeon set their wings a hundred yards away and sailed right up to the decoys. It was the easiest possible double at thirty yards. As Jimmy was still pushing the boat, there was little chance of any more ducks coming just then, so I waded out and stuck up both widgeon on sharp pointed sticks alongside of the mud decoys, getting back to the sink box just in time. single mallard coming from the north came flying a hundred yards out from the sink box. I gave him a low "m'amph." Wheeling swiftly he came straight in, flying slower as he neared the decoys. It was like shoot-



"The big black raft of ducks west of us, our northern flight visitors, were growing uneasy, ready to seek new local feeding places or perhaps to start for the sunny southland"

Courtesy of Shiplers, Salt Lake City, Utah

ing at a mark. There were no more ducks after that, as Jimmy came splashing along back to the sink box walking in the mud and water.

"That was quite a walk," said Jimmy. "There's one place out there where the mud was over my knees for two hundred yards. Ginger, but I'm warm; where's the water bottle?"

We had scattering shots for the next three hours, but about noon the big raft began to show signs of life. The ducks were becoming uneasy, ready to seek new feeding places or perhaps to start for the sunny southland. Bunches of them would rise, circle around, and alight again close to the place they started from. Some of them wanted to go calling and our decoys were the nearest neighbors. A bunch of seven redheads were the first arrivals, but a hundred yards out they turned south. Our chances looked poor until Jimmy gave a hoarse series of grunts, the canvasback call. That settled it. The redheads appeared anxious to visit their friends the canvasbacks. Still for a first call they were a little over polite and turned south again at fifty yards. We gave them four barrels and two dropped. Timmy had to chase out and reshoot one of them.

A pair of mallards were the next callers. A mallard is such a satisfactory bird to shoot, big in the air and large and juicy on the table. The first time, they came over us high up, too far to shoot. Jimmy gave them a low call. They circled and came in again, this time with wings bowed. We both fired; the first one came down, the other started off, zigzagging as it flew upwards, and it took two additional shots to get him.

"Jimmy," I said, "you called these ducks in good style; who taught you to do it?"

Jimmy was immensely pleased at the compliment.

110 "COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

"I ought to know how by this time," he answered, "to call ducks successfully you must know what kind of ducks they are as far as you can see them. Then it is not hard, if you know the calls of the different varieties of ducks, to give them a try."

"How do you know each kind of ducks, when you see them at a great distance? The one trouble I have is not knowing what variety they are until they are fairly close."

"It's curious," said Jimmy; "I don't know how I know them, but I do and can tell what they are as far as I can see them."

"It's a gift," I said, "like many others, born with one, I suppose."

"There certainly is a big difference in men in their manner of shooting ducks," said Jimmy thoughtfully. "Some men understand just how to set out their decoys according to the wind, know the kind of ducks when they come in sight and the proper call to attract their attention, and nine times out of ten can call them up to the decoys. Another man puts out his decoys anyway. Makes no pretensions at calling ducks, but just sits still and shoots at the ducks that during the day incidentally come monkeying around within range. I guess that's about the size of it."

"You're dead right," I answered, "but there is another class that includes perhaps the majority of duck hunters."

"Who are they?" asked Jimmy.

"Well, there's a whole crowd, a good deal like myself, that are neither professional duck shooting sharks nor are they tenderfeet at the business. We know a little about putting out decoys and a little about calling ducks."

My protest was interrupted by a noise like a passing heavily loaded freight train. Two thirds of the big raft of ducks rose in the air, made a wide swinging circle, and then started directly for us, rising slowly in the air as they came on.

"Look at that," said Jimmy in a disgusted tone. "There they go all together and I expected they would decoy, when they once started in small bunches. They are all big birds, well rested after their last night's flight from the north, and now they are all going together over towards Pintail Neck, where they can wade around in the shallow water and feed. They won't be back here again. We'll have to shoot as they fly over or not at all."

Judging the number of birds in these great flocks of ducks is largely guesswork, but there must have been two thousand of them. They came on in loosely scattered flocks, each flock separate and distinct from the rest. The first flock were all canvasbacks. They were at a good height, sixty yards at least, but we gave them four barrels. One fell at once and another who was in trouble gave up all holds when close to the Mud Queen, and came down like a stone.

The rest of the ducks never paused in their flight but rose higher, and before reaching the sink box their ranks opened and divided in two long lines; they flew by on either side but far out of shot. It was a pretty sight and I enjoyed seeing them flying high overhead.

"I'll just bet," said Jimmy disgustedly, "that all the big flight ducks that were in the raft are in those big flocks that just went over us."

"What kind of ducks are those that are still out in the water?"

"Oh, those that are left," sneered Jimmy, "are nine tenths spoonbills."

"COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

As Jimmy spoke a little bunch of seven ducks rose from the raft, swung round, and headed in towards shore. Flying as they were headed they would pass about two hundred yards south of us. But as they came nearer they saw our decoys; Jimmy was calling low to them but when they turned towards us he stopped calling. They didn't set their wings but after taking a good look at the decoys they flew by a good gunshot wide of the sink box. By good luck I knocked one down. Jimmy began calling again. Perhaps it was the call or possibly they saw the wounded duck swimming in the water. Anyway the six spoonbills turned and circled back again, within shot. We got three of them.

"There," said Jimmy. "Didn't I tell you that spoonbills were silly, greedy ducks? Think of their being such fools as to turn right back after being shot at, and fly right over the decoys again!"

"Oh, well," I told him, "I don't mind, all ducks are just ducks to me; canvasbacks and redheads are bigger when you bag them, but I like to shoot spoonbills or even teal."

"Did you ever hear how the spoonbill duck acquired the name of spoonbill?" asked Jimmy.

"Why, no, I never did; they always have been called 'spoonbills,' so far as I know."

"Last spring," said Jimmy, "I went down to town for a few days to see the boys and take in the Movies. One afternoon I went into a grocery store and a lot of the boys were sitting round the store, talking ducks, and Captain Spooner said—. . . Here come three spoonbills now," whispered Jimmy. We didn't even bother to get down but just sat still. The three ducks had evidently started from the bunch that still remained

west of us, but we never saw them until they were halfway over to us.

"Now then," said Jimmy, "I'll bet a dollar you don't get all three of them."

"You're on," said I grabbing the automatic.

They came in nicely; swinging round from a little south of us, they turned north until fifty yards outside our decoys, then with outstretched steady wings and looking like small balloons they sailed right up to the decoys. The automatic worked nicely. Two ducks luckily got in line and dropped at the first shot and I nailed the other before he had time to get up full speed. All three fell within thirty-five yards.

"Darn all spoonbills," said Jimmy, "it's just disgusting the way those three knew I was betting on them. Two of them had to get in line for your first shot and the other one did not have enough sense to fly away. Confound such stupid ducks."

"It's too bad," I said, "that our bet was not twenty-five dollars."

"Huh! Twenty-five dollars!" said Jimmy; "why should I bet all that money? I think a nickel is enough to bet on spoonbills."

"What sort of a yarn did Captain Spooner spin on spoonbills?" I asked.

"Oh, the Captain said it happened in the Ark," replied Jimmy. "He said old man Noah had in the Ark all the animals and birds that were native to Central Asia. Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their children took care of and fed them all. As the animals were the heaviest they were down on the lower and middle decks and Cap. Spooner said it was a terrible job feeding some of the animals hay and others raw meat.

"'Oh, come on, Captain Spooner,' said I interrupting,

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"COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

'where would Noah get any raw meat in the Ark? He only had two of each kind of animal and he could not possibly kill those.'

"'Keep silence now, young man,' said Captain Spooner sternly, 'but ask all the questions you wish after my historical story is ended.' Then continuing, he said the feathered tribe being lighter in weight were in coops forward on the upper deck. Aft there were twenty tons of gravel, some of which was placed in each coop every day to help the birds' digestion. Shem and his two children Joseph and Mary took care of the birds. happened that Shem had a terrible attack of lumbago, and after drinking a cup of hot peppermint tea, Shem went to bed, leaving his two children in charge of the birds for the day. Joseph was fishing off the lower deck of the Ark when Mary called to him to come up and help mix feed for the birds. Joseph called back, 'In a minute.' Mary was mixing up a lot of cracked corn and bran with hot water when Joseph called, 'Come here quick, Mary.' Mary dropped her work and rushed down. A big fish had taken Joseph's bait and the line was cutting through the water in all directions. The line was taut and just humming. Joseph was hanging on but the line was beginning to slip through his fingers. Mary caught hold of the line and together they held it pretty steady.

"'Will he straighten out your hook, Joseph?' asked Mary.

"'No, the hook's all right,' replied Joseph. 'It's all steel. I bought it at the gunstore of Lycurgus Cæsar in Gomorrah. It's the line I'm afraid of.' Just as he spoke the line parted and both Mary and Joseph almost fell backwards. Joseph got up and pulled in the broken line, muttering to himself, 'I'll get that goshdinged fish yet, see if I don't!'

"'I'm sorry,' said Mary, 'that you lost your fish, but we must hurry and feed these birds, just hear them holler!'

"When they reached the upper deck they found two ducks had escaped from their coop and had eaten all the feed Mary had mixed. They told their father about it and he was so mad he forgot all about his lumbago and got up and told grandpa Noah. Noah got mad too and said 'those confounded pigs should have spoons to eat with.' The next morning Mary heard a great clattering in the coop of the two ducks that escaped the day before and looking in she saw the first spoonbill ducks ever in captivity. Mary told father Shem, Shem told grandpa Noah, and Noah struck his cane down hard on the deck and said 'served 'em right!'"

"You don't take any stock in such a yarn as that do you?" I asked.

"Well, I don't know, it don't seem any more astounding than the Ark story," replied Jimmy, "but anyhow I've often wondered what kind of a fish was on Joe's line."

The day proved warm and calm and there was little doing. The black raft of ducks had disintegrated and but few ducks came to our decoys. It seemed an hour between shots. Suddenly Jimmy exclaimed, "Look at that." "That" was a bunch of a couple of hundred snow geese flying in from the east in the odd shape of a bulging figure eight. As we looked six faint reports of a far-away shotgun came drifting in. "Someone emptied their pump gun at the geese," remarked Jimmy.

It was true, the geese rose higher; the lower half of the figure eight drew out in a larger circle as they came directly over us. We could hear them gabbling to each other. There was no use in shooting. They were too high for any shot to reach them but it was a wonderful sight to see them pass, their white bodies gleaming in the sun, while their black-tipped wings framed the picture of each individual bird.

"Those geese came in from the North a week ago," said Jimmy, "and about one o'clock every day they fly in here after feeding somewhere east and settle down half a mile west of Slaughter Island." As Jimmy spoke we could see the geese circling and lowering over the distant marsh, where Jimmy said they were accustomed to alight to rest and sleep away the afternoon. Then amidst a great racket the geese began to alight in bunches. When half were down, the rest rose again in the air and circled once more. Evidently satisfied that all was well they came back again and flying downward on a long slant alighted with the others.

"There's not much use staying here," said Jimmy, "let's get the boat and give those geese a try; maybe we can get some."

"All right," I said, "get the boat and we'll try it anyway."

Jimmy splashed off and soon returned with the boat. It took only a few moments to pick up our ducks and put everything on board and then we started for Slaughter Island. Rounding the island we made good headway until we reached the middle of First Teal Pass, a rather wide and deep creek, west of the island. Here we hid the boat and each taking a box of number three shot shells we walked a hundred yards until on the border of a wide shallow creek, called Second Teal Pass, we made a low blind in the tules.

All was quiet for half an hour. A few teal flew by but we did not dare fire at them on account of the geese.

Then we saw a dark spot, a man's head above the tules, moving slowly from the west in our direction. Someone else had seen the geese. Soon afterwards the geese began to gabble. They had seen the unknown shooter coming from the west. The shooter ducked down and hid in the tall tules, but it was too late, the geese had seen him and the whole bunch rose in the air in one long line, scolding loudly among themselves.

The entire flock rose slowly about a hundred yards and then broke up into smaller flocks of from half a dozen to fifty birds and began circling and scouting over the entire marsh. A bunch of seven came directly towards us. Jimmy began calling, "Hock! Hock! Hock! Hock! Hock!" pronounced very rapidly. As the geese came on he repeated the call three times. It seemed an odd-sounding call for geese, but they answered and came steadily towards us, lowering until they were directly over us and about fifty yards high. Then Jimmy gave the word "Now." The caller of the word always has the edge on the other fellow and Jimmy's gun exploded a fraction of a second before mine. Two geese came down following our first shots and our remaining shells accounted for two more, one falling a hundred yards away and the other still farther out. This last bird started to fly when Iimmy went after him and it took another shell to settle the account. Four geese out of seven was not bad.

The rest of the geese were still circling over the marsh but far out of gunshot. When Jimmy returned we put out our four geese on the sandbar in the creek as decoys. There was one lone stick in the sandbar, where some ducks had sometime in the past been stuck up as decoys. We had one goose standing with his head up, a sentinel

on watch, while the other three seemed asleep with their heads under their wings.

The geese were shy. None came near us for an hour. We kept still and well hidden in our stand among the tules. Suddenly Jimmy jumped to his feet and fired. A single goose was crossing behind us. It was a long shot but the goose came down finally and was stone dead when Jimmy picked it up. When we set up the goose decoys I noticed a one-legged avocet snipe, a veteran of former wars, feeding within a dozen yards of us. It took no notice of our shooting, but calmly went on feeding and laboriously hopping about on its one leg. It would feed for twenty minutes and then would fly to the sandbar to lie down. It was evidently a great effort for the bird to hop about on its one leg in the water. After resting twenty minutes it would fly again to the shallow water and begin feeding.

The geese by this time were a mile away, circling the north end of the marsh, seemingly desirous of alighting again. We were watching them when a single teal whizzed past and almost immediately came another.

"Where we are is Teal Pass," said Jimmy, "and it looks as if we might get a shoot on teal after all. How many teal shells have you?" A careful examination of my left-hand shell pocket showed eleven number seven shells.

"You better go back to the boat and get four boxes of number seven shells," I said to Jimmy, "and we will try out this teal flight."

It was well named "teal pass" for most of the teal "passed" all right. They came down before the wind like bullets. There were no bunches or flocks but all single birds. They came from the west low down over the tules; you could see them coming, and get all ready,

that was the only thing in my favor, and then they crossed the so-called "pass," the wide shallow creek, in the marsh. Their crossing place was forty yards from our blind, but a single teal, at forty yards, flying at full speed, is not a particularly easy object to hit even if they were all side shots. I happened to know because after shooting all my eleven shells I had only two teal down.

I began shooting six feet ahead of them, then ten feet, then fifteen, and every shot was a perfect exhibition of how not to do it. Then in despair I pushed the guntwenty feet ahead and at the shot the teal collapsed. But then I only had one shell left. After faithfully missing nine straight, I killed two in succession. We had a very nice shoot after Jimmy brought up the ammunition reserves. There was no change in the direction of their flight, nor did any birds show up except teal and nearly all single teal at that. But how they did fly! It took exactly forty-five minutes to kill one man's limit of twenty-five.

"Sometimes," said Jimmy when the teal stopped flying, "there's a flight of mallards in this pass towards evening. Let's stick around and maybe we may get a few to-night and while we are waiting I'll tell you how I put both feet into it, good and plenty, three years ago this fall."

"How did you manage to do that?" I asked.

"It was before the season opened," replied Jimmy. "Sam Black and I were down at the shack getting things ready, when one evening a tall thin chap came down in an auto with a great big trunk and told me he was a professor of biology. I supposed it had something to do with bibles. Of course I asked him in. After supper, during a little pause in the conversation, I thought

I would let him down easy so I said, 'You have come to a poor place for your business; Sam Black don't read much and I have one at home.'

"'One what?' asked the professor.

"'Why, a bible,' I replied. 'You said you were a professor of biology; ain't you selling the bibles you carry in that big heavy trunk?'

"The professor laughed. 'You didn't understand me,' he said; "biology" means the "science of life." I am sent here from Washington by the government to find the reason why all the ducks died last year.'

"'Oh, is that it?' I said. 'Why, they think now the ducks all died from precipitates, or some such word, that fell in the water from the smoke from the mills of the big copper mines. Do you think such a thing possible?'

"'No,' he answered. 'I don't. The ducks sent to us had all the symptoms of alkali poison. Our theory is that, now there are more farmers on Bear River and consequently more water is taken out of the river for irrigation during the growing season, a goodly portion of the two lakes, that formerly were covered with water, goes dry during the summer. The alkali constantly works to the surface and as there is not enough water, to carry it off, dries there. Then when the rains come, the rain water becomes so saturated with alkali that it poisons the ducks and marshbirds wholesale.'

"'That's a curious, though reasonable explanation,' I told him.

"'Yes,' he said, 'but did you ever know that shot will kill a duck?'

"'Why, yes, I knew that,' I said, 'I have shot enough ducks to be acquainted with that fact . . .'"—"Keep down," I whispered, "here comes a mallard." The mallard came fast, just above the tops of the tules. He

had evidently been feeding in the marsh and was looking for another feeding place and perhaps a companion or two. The moment his eve caught sight of the snow geese, our decovs on the sandbar, he began to shy off. Possibly wild geese and ducks don't get along well socially. Anyway I don't remember ever having seen them feeding close together. The mallard rose forty vards and started to pass around the geese. Jimmy had his gun ready but it was my shot. It was not a difficult shot, but I was a little nervous, knowing Jimmy would shoot if my first shot missed the duck. But luck was on my side and at the report of the gun the mallard dropped in the thick tules. We had a long hunt for him and were just about to give it up when I saw a bunch of tules move a little. I pounced on the spot and there was the bird, unharmed except a broken wing.

"What did the professor say to your shots killing ducks?" I asked when we were once more settled in the blind.

"He only grinned a little and said he supposed my conclusions were true, but he did not mean it that way; he meant a duck would die if he ate twenty number seven shot.

"'Ducks don't eat shot.' I told him.

"'Not from choice,' he replied, 'but think of the thousands of tons of shot that are scattered about in the mud of these lakes. Then as most of the shooting is done where the water is shallow, say from one to four inches deep, the ducks when feeding must often pick up shot and swallow them with other food.'

"I was kind of taken by surprise at this reasoning," said Jimmy, "and hardly knew what to say, so to gain time I asked, 'How do you make out that the shot when eaten kills the duck?'

122 "COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

"'I have experimented with a number of ducks and found that twenty number seven shot will kill a pintail duck in two weeks and apintail is an average-sized duck. They get droopy after three days and die after fourteen days with all the symptoms of painters' lead colic. You know a number seven shot is as large as the pupil of the duck's eye. Now if you were to swallow twenty buckshot each as large as the pupil of your eye, you might find yourself in a heap of trouble before you got through.' That professor chap certainly experimented a lot, he was always at it," added Jimmy.

"What was he experimenting about?" I asked.

"With all kinds of sick ducks in coops," Jimmy answered.

"What were the symptoms of this duck sickness?"

"First dysentery, then paralysis of the wings. The ducks that had the disease soon lost the ability to fly. When the paralysis attacked their legs, the ducks would crawl under a bunch of tules and remain in a stupor until they died, generally twenty-four hours later."

"Could the professor cure them?" I asked.

"Yes," said Jimmy, "he could; all he did was to put them in coops with good fresh water and food. Nearly all recovered when treated in this manner except the ducks found far gone in their preliminary death stupor. When the sick ducks began to get better under the fresh water cure you ought to see them eat. They were as hungry as spring bears. The professor's theory that it was the strong alkali solution in the water that killed the ducks was undoubtedly the correct one."

We stayed late that evening because we knew the Mud Queen would bring us to the landing in half an hour. Just before sundown a half a dozen single mallards came in one after the other but only three came

within shot. We bagged two of them. At sunset, the Mud Queen, swift as ever, passed half a dozen homeward-bound sportsmen, toiling at the oars, who followed her swift flight over the mud with envious eyes. All hands seemed tired that night and turned in early. Tired men sleep well and at nine o'clock the shack was a land of dreams.

THE LOST JOKE

"Is there, is there balm in Gilead? tell me, tell me I implore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

EDGAR ALLAN POB.

It was cold that morning and the wind was blowing a gale. As I opened the dining-room door the waitress glanced up and then called to the cook through the slide, "Put on three extra batter cakes," so I knew she saw me. We had steak, broiled teal, fried potatoes, toast, and coffee. It's always well to have a good hearty breakfast tucked away under your ribs on cold days when you're duck shooting, so I topped off with six large batter cakes.

The gale had upset our plans for the day. Glasses in hand I climbed to the crow's nest on top of the house and scanned the marshes. The tall dead marsh tules were bent by the wind in great billowing waves, sweeping one after the other, a yellow sea of gold. The wind came in quick gusts that grew stronger every minute. To go out on the lake was impossible, it was a smother of foam. Jimmy drily remarked, "Jerusalem! You won't catch me out on that water, I'm going to be a member of the Naval Reserve to-day and stay on dry land."

The southeast wind had blown a lot of water from the east to the west side of the lake, as always happens in these large shallow lakes. The soft mud and scattered pools of water on the east side, in the lee of the land,

were black with feeding ducks. Jimmy took a squint through the glass and said:

- "Pintail Neck is the place for us to-day."
- "And where is Pintail Neck?" I asked.

"It's where you see all those ducks," he answered. "There was something I wanted to ask you, but those ducks won't wait and my question will; let's get ready and start after them."

Generally we rowed to and from the shooting grounds and to-day I supposed we would do the same, but I got left, walking was good enough that day. We rowed up the river until we reached the canal, a feeder from the river to the East Lake. Here we walked, towing the boat with a double rope, Jimmy on one bank, I on the other. The canal was a mile-long cut-off, avoiding a three-mile row round by the river. We routed out a number of ducks from the canal as we went along, but the big bunch that started up when we came out at the west end of the canal made a noise like a freight train and looked like an enormous flock of gigantic blackbirds.

It was a beautiful sight to see this immense flock of ducks whirl in the air with such curious ease and precision, twisting and turning at some hidden signal, without so much as rumpling a feather and as gracefully as if they were a modest bunch of peep. From the lake entrance to the canal I walked a mile and a half through mud six inches deep, while Jimmy kneeled on one knee in the stern of the boat and pushed it ahead with his foot,—there was not enough water to row. It was hard walking and several times I called a halt and sat on the boat and rested.

At last we reached a likely looking point, covered with tules, that jutted out into Pintail Bay. At its extremity was a tumbled-down blind, evidently an old-time favorite. Many hundreds of used shells were scattered about in all stages of decay, and the remains of mud decoys of other days were still visible. Jimmy had brought a canvas-covered stool, which I found very comfortable after my experience the day before with the soft side of a shell box. Then Jimmy turned to and repaired the blind, building it up good and high with tules.

"There," said Jimmy at last, looking with satisfaction at the blind—a big haystack-looking creation,—"I have made you a gun room and a smoking room, and there's lots of space for you to sit up and smoke cigars, without the ducks seeing you."

Jimmy had been much disgusted the day before at my attempts at dropping my cigar and picking up the gun, on occasions when a teal coming in from nowhere in particular had caught me napping and in the general scramble that ensued had flown gleefully away unharmed.

Jimmy waded out in the mud and put out my decoys for me. Then picking up his gun, he said, "We're going to have a freeze-up to-night. It's pretty near the end of the season and I want to shoot to-day."

"All right," said I. "How many shells have you got?"

"Fifty."

"Well, here's twenty-five more," I said as I handed them to him. "Hope you will have a nice shoot."

"Oh, I'll get a shoot to-day all right," answered Jimmy. "We never fired at that big bunch of ducks that got up at the mouth of the canal and there were just thousands of 'em. There was something I wanted to ask you, but I guess it will wait. There's a good blind on that point across this bay where I'm going to shoot to-day," and off he went with the boat.

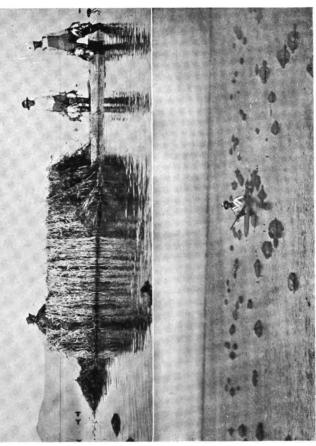


The haystack blind on Pintail Neck

A boat blind in the center of the lake.
When shooting from it the center of the boat is in the blind, the extending ends covered and hidden by tules

Jimmy in the sink box

The day's shooting was over. The twentyfour ducks shot during the day were picked
up and we were all ready to row home
when I pushed the boat out through
the mud decoys and kodaked Jimmy
standing up in the sink box. Dead
birds are always staked out
beyond the outer mud
decoys



There I sat, monarch of all I surveyed, not a duck in sight, but I felt sure they would begin coming back to their old feeding grounds before long. I took a little stroll in the tules and started a jacksnipe, the only one I had seen on the trip, which seesawed away over the marsh calling cheerfully back to me that he had "scaped." My neck began to get tired twisting all ways at once, watching for ducks. At last I saw one, well out over the water, heading straight for the blind. As he swung past the outside decoys, I let go and down he came, a cock teal in full winter plumage.

To pass away the time I got a sharp stick, ran it under his head and stuck him up just outside the decoys. Somehow he didn't appear quite so shipshape as the ones Jimmy sat up. He had a dissipated, rakish look, as though he had been on a jamboree and was trying to get the decoys to go on a spree with him. Then came another half-hour wait and nothing doing. Half a dozen curlew sailed swiftly by, with the wind behind them. I let them go without a shot. Many years ago on an Eastern marsh, where I used to get busy shooting shore birds, such a sight would have created an excitement, as shooting a curlew there was an event.

A widgeon came flying before the wind over the tules on the left, saw the decoys, and headed straight for them. I laughed as I crouched low down in the subcellar of Jimmy's two-story blind. It did seem high. The widgeon became suddenly shy, it circled round outside the decoys. Perhaps the double-decker blind was too much for his nerves. On the second circle he came within fifty yards. It was then or never, and it was then. I heard the shot strike and saw the duck spring high in air to get out of danger. Raising my aim

two feet over him, I fired the second barrel and down he tumbled.

These shots seemed invitation cards as almost immediately three teal came over my head from behind. A hurried aim and one fell but it should have been a double. Two teal came in from the water side. I waited for them to breast the decoys. One fell and the other hurried on over the marsh and away as the shot whistled behind him.

Whish! High overhead coming from the marsh was a fine fat mallard. He saw me and didn't even stop to look at the decoys. It was a quick going-away shot, but he dropped at the crack of the gun and struck the shallow water with a muddy splash. I thought I'd smoke a cigar to celebrate the mallard. Two matches were blown out. I only had four. Getting down in the bottom of the blind out of the wind I lighted my cigar and sat there contentedly smoking for a few minutes before resuming my seat. When I looked out again something was stirring among the decoys. I dodged down out of sight and grabbed the gun. It was a very suspicious spoonbill that had flown in and alighted so quietly that I hadn't heard it. He sat upright, alert and motionless, with his head turned so he could see my two-story structure with one eye. Finally he made up his mind he didn't like the looks of things and sprang with a great bound into the air. I watched the manner of his start. He first crouched and then sprang upward with the full force of his legs and a half a dozen very quick, strong beats of his wings. I let him get eight rods away before I fired.

Then came a waiting spell. I picked up some small stakes that had done duty before in the same line and stuck up my five ducks alongside my first one and had a

group of six as rowdy, scandalous-looking real-article decoys as anyone would hate to have. It sounds easy but it takes knack to set up a dead sprawling duck in a natural position.

A touch of cold fell gently on my cheek. The wind had changed to the north'ard. In half an hour it was twenty degrees colder. My double-decker blind failed to keep out the searching wind. I robbed half of it to make the northwest side thicker. The water was being blown back again from the west side of the lake. The point my blind was on was to windward now and not in the lee of the land. The distant feeding ducks became wild and restless, rising in bunches and making slow headway against the wind, sometimes even blown backward in a long circle only to regain the ground lost when the gust ended.

Still the shooting was good. It came from an unexpected source, the big marsh south of the blind. Many mallards were hidden there feeding among the small pond holes. Mallards are bold and hardy ducks, but perhaps they also felt the icy touch of coming winter and began to long for the pleasures and delights of the Southland. They were uneasy and in small flocks and singles began to fly about low down over the marsh. Then a bunch of three flying near the north end of the marsh saw my decoys and decided to make a neighborly call. The luck was with me and I made two long singles that I flattered myself by calling a double.

It was pretty though difficult shooting. The mallards came up slowly against the strong gale. At the first shot, they would break back, the wind carrying them before it twisting and skimming, the hardest possible work for the second barrel. It's the acme of sport—these difficult shots on ducks when you have

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only a fraction of a second to aim, allow for a gale of wind and all contingencies, and the shot going true, to see the duck whirl downward head over heels until it strikes the water for the last time. One killed this way is more satisfaction than a dozen shot down while hovering over the decoys.

It was easier for the mallards to fly against the wind than to fly with it. They would come, see my decoys and the dissipated six with evident surprise, and just hustle to get next, if the wind would let them. It was an hour long to be remembered, of splendid mallard shooting, of difficult but successful shots. I picked up sixteen mallards. The shooting was so interesting that everything else was forgotten. Looking around at last I saw the sun was hidden behind great masses of clouds. Just below the clouds, arrowheads of wild geese were flying in great wedges across the dark gray sky; while lower down flock after flock of ducks were steadily crossing the mountains to the north and flying onward. taking no notice of our lakes of fresh water, headed for Southern feeding places. Winter was at their heels and the wild fowl knew it.

Jimmy was still firing from his blind and the boom of his gun came down wind across the water pretty regularly. Now and then when his firing slackened I would wave my hat but Jimmy took no notice. It was getting very cold; my extra leather jacket did not give as much warmth as I liked, but walking around up to the knees in mud and water, picking up widely scattered ducks, warmed me up in short order. Jimmy saw me picking up and came over.

"Pretty cold isn't it?" he remarked. "Glad I brought along this vest; first time I've worn it this season. I feel real comfortable in it."

Jimmy had on a hickory shirt and the vest. As a warmth producer, the vest was a corker; cut low in front, with all but one button gone, it hardly looked the part that Jimmy assigned it.

"All the ducks are in the boat; is everything else in?" said Jimmy. "The water is blowing back here now and we won't have any trouble rowing to the canal."

It was freezing hard. We had to smash shore ice half an inch thick before we could get into the canal and the mile to the river through the canal seemed five. It was frozen over, but the ice was not strong enough to hold up the boat and it was slow work smashing the ice, before the boat could pass.

The ice was extra thick under the bridge that crossed the canal just before the river was reached. The ice would not allow the boat to pass and it was a job to get under the bridge and break the ice in the dark. There was a big pile of driftwood near the bridge and I made a roaring fire of it.

"That's great," said Jimmy as the flames brightened things up. "I can see first rate now." The boat soon came from under the shadows into the running water of the river.

"Let's sit by the fire, smoke a cigarette, rest a little, and get warmed through before starting home," said Jimmy. The wind made the fire burn fiercely and it was very warm. Turning to Jimmy I asked, "What was it you wished to say to me two or three times this morning?"

"Oh!" said Jimmy, "not much. You know Fat Johnson; well, he was down here not long ago and told me a story."

"It wasn't one of his 'Faded leaf' stories was it?" I asked. "If it was I don't care particularly to hear it."

132 "COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

"Oh, no," said Jimmy. "The story was nothing like that. Johnson made a great big long story of it, but the gist of it went this way-A fellow got married and in ten years had a family of five children. I couldn't see anything out of the way in the story so far, it's often like that out here in Utah," remarked Jimmy. "Then Iohnson said the wife had a kodak and was fond of taking photographs and when each child was two years old she would take a picture of it with the child's favorite toy in its arms. The first child held a teddy bear, the second a doll, and so on; the fifth child held a ravenand then Fat Johnson let out a roar of laughter that scared up every duck for a mile around. Of course, I laughed too although I couldn't see any point, but then us guides always has to be pleasant. You know I have even tried once or twice to interest you."

"What's that," I cried, "interest me?"

"Oh, well," said Jimmy, "let it go. That night at dinner in the guides' house I told them the story, and when I came to the end I began to laugh like everything. All the guides did was what they always do, when they hear a story that has no point to it, just put their knives and forks down on their plates, and all glared at me. Finally, Jack the head guide said, 'Jimmy, what's the matter with you? you're making more noise than you do when eating soup. There's no point to that tale you just bailed out. Suppose the child wanted to hold a raven, a canvasback-duck, or a turkey buzzard in its arms, what difference would it make?' Well, I didn't know and all that evening the guides made fun of me. Finally one said, 'They don't have ravens in these United States of America, Jimmy. What part of the world was Fat Johnson talking about?' Of course, I didn't know. They just plagued the life out of me. But Johnson laughed so hard it always seemed to me that there must be something to laugh at, somewhere. What do you think?"

Shades of Edgar Allan Poe! What answer could I make. Then I thought the line of least resistance was the easiest to follow, so I said:

"Darned if I can see any point at all to that yarn."

"I never did see any," said Jimmy grinning from ear to ear, "and I'll bet a dime to ten cents there ain't none."

"ABOUT A BUSHEL." A QUAIL STORY

"O! de pa'tridge do some skippin' when she see heem on the swamp, For she know Bateese don' go for not'ing dere,
When de rabbit see him comin', wall! you ought to see heem jomp.
Why he want to climb de tree, he feel so scare.
After two hour by de reever I hear his leetle song
Den I meet heem, all his pockets full of snipe,
An' me, I go de sam' place, an' I tramp de w'ole day long
An' I'm only shootin' two or t'ree, Ba Cripe."

-Wm. HENRY DRUMMOND.

"COUGHVILLE! COUGHVILLE!" called the brakeman, hurrying through the last car. The train was six hours late but at last we were in Coffeeville. It was half an hour after midnight. Few people were about. Except two or three saloons or restaurants across the street from the depot everything was dark. The ticket seller locked his door, after telling me he hoped for two hours sleep before opening up for the two-thirty train.

"Where does the two-thirty train go?" I asked.

"Through the Territory," he answered. It was the train I wanted but it was a long two hours, waiting on the platform. It was too stuffy inside. When I bought my ticket I asked:

"Why does the train start at such an unearthly hour?"

"It's an accommodation train," the ticket seller said. "It enters the Indian Territory at 3 A. M. and that's daytime for the Indians down there. Indians are early birds. Don't you remember the habit they

had in pioneer days of always attacking an hour before dawn?"

"Yes," I said, "I remember that, but do they get up as early in peace as in war time?"

"It don't seem to make much difference," he answered. "The Indians travel a lot on this train; they like nothing better than to run down the line a station or two to call on some of their friends. They won't travel at night, but if we hit the Indian Territory line by three o'clock in the morning it's all right."

Four o'clock of a November morning is a hideous hour to arrive anywhere, but it's worse still to find yourself at that hour on the platform of a strange village station, watching the red rear lights of the departing train disappear in the darkness. One meal was plenty at the hotel and I started out prospecting for something better. Dogs were barking near the outskirts of the village. I made the acquaintance of their owner, good old Dad, a sportsman of the old school, a fine shot and able to make bird dogs do everything but speak.

There was a son, G. Dan. What did G. stand for? Don't ask me because I don't know. If I had to make a guess I should say, after knowing him, that it stood for "Gentleman." My! but G. Dan could shoot. The first time we shot together was on jacksnipe. The big marsh, a couple of miles long, not far from the house, was ideal for snipe. Now jacksnipe, you know, are not such awful easy birds to hit, but G. Dan didn't mind that. He just strolled along with his pump gun on his shoulder. A snipe got up and I killed it.

"How was that?" I asked.

"Fine," said G. Dan.

Two snipe jumped from a marshy spot to my left. I dropped one. At the sound of the gun a third snipe

rose only thirty feet away and zizzagged off. I cut him down. Turning to G. Dan I said:

"Pretty good double that, eh?"

"Fine," said G. Dan.

A little farther on a whisp of five snipe got up together and darted off, twisting and turning. One came out on my side and I fired and downed him. I heard G. Dan's pump go bang! bang! bang! as fast as you are reading it. I glanced round and saw three snipe falling in the air and as I looked the fourth bird doubled up and collapsed.

"I'm going to sell this pump gun," remarked G. Dan, "and go back to the double barrel. The pump gun is too murderous."

I made no further remarks about my snipe shooting. Fifteen years ago the Indian Territory was a very different shooting proposition to what it is to-day. The entire settlement near the beautiful Grand River was surrounded by Indian farmers. Fortunately for the quail they farmed but little of the land; the rest was high fence corners and a wilderness of brambles and shelter. The quail harvest was sown with lavish hand. The Indian boys trapped them sometimes but quail were too small game for the warriors to bother with. Shooters from the village used occasionally to drive out along the road and try to get what they called "a mess of quail." Late in the afternoon of Sunday, the day of my arrival, I was sitting on the fence, smoking, when a party of village shooters stopped their surrey and a pleasant voice said:

"Can you spare a few matches?" I could, and then asked:

"What luck did you have to-day with the quail?"

"Oh," he replied, "fair, about a bushel."

"You don't mean to say you killed a bushel of quail to-day?"

"Why, yes, about a bushel. Are you a stranger here?" he added.

"Only got in this morning; I'm on a quail roundup myself," I said.

"Oh! if that's so I might as well tell you now right off the bat that 'about a bushel' in the Territory means twenty birds. We're a very generous, big-hearted people down here and talk large amounts in conversation; isn't that so, Dick?" he said, turning to a companion.

"If it is," said a strong bass voice from the surrey which I supposed was Dick, "you're wrong about that bushel as we only have eighteen quail, but I wiped your eye three times if you did kill five more than I did." The grouch bug was working overtime. But I took the hint. When asked about the day's score after that my answer was always, "About a bushel."

Before I could shoot in the Indian Territory, it was necessary to obtain a shooting permit from the chief of the Indian tribe governing our particular section. The permit when it came was a curiosity. The gracious permission was written on a piece of brown wrapping paper with a blue pencil, was undated, and read:

"i permit gardner to shoot over my land for three weeks he promise not to hurt the bird."

This document was signed by a single name with a lot of hieroglyphics after it, probably a secret sign that the signature was official, as few of the Indian landowners could read. There was really more truth than fiction in the last clause. I was so green at partridge or quail shooting as to be still startled and disconcerted when a covey whirred up from around my feet.

We started early next morning. Dad drove a spank-

ing team and he had four dogs, two for morning and two for afternoon work. The dogs were fastened and kept apart in the wagon by a simple device—two feet of clothesline, a small round hole in the wagon bed, a knot at one end of the clothesline under the wagon bed, a harness snap on the other, and the dog with the spring snapped on his collar was safely in place to stay.

The land was all owned by Indians. Before going on a man's farm we would drive to his house and after showing the "chief"—all Indians are chief's when you want to shoot over their land—the head chief's permit to shoot in the Territory and presenting him with a cigar or two and something in the money line, anywhere from two bits to a dollar, he would grant permission to shoot on his farm for the day. On one occasion the cigars were taken but the dollar was scornfully refused. We were allowed to shoot and there certainly were plenty of quail, they buzzed about like bees. Before going home I called again on the chief. He was seated in the same rocking chair under the same tree as in the morning and apparently had been doing just about nothing all day. We had shot thirty quail and desired to show our appreciation of his kindness in allowing us to shoot. I walked over to him, bowed, and offered him a dozen quail. He looked at the quail and then at me and grunted out:

"You skin 'um, me eat 'um."

The days were short in late November. We would get a daylight start and get home after dark. The best shooting was across the beautiful Grand River. It was the only wild river I ever made good friends with. I had a strange feeling that I had known the river long ago. Even the skyline of the distant hills seemed familiar.

The shooting was certainly fine, but I was as green as grass at it. The rising whirr of the quail coveys startled me. The birds seemed so small after shooting ducks that it was hard to judge the right distance. It was either a miss or a double the first day—the miss when I shot too quickly. It was splendid shooting. Quail were everywhere. Full coveys were sometimes found not two hundred yards apart. The dogs would start twenty-five to thirty coveys a day. We would get in our four shots on the first rise, but unless they scattered out away from the brambles, we would let them go and hunt up another covey.

The dogs had short kennel names. It was a week before I knew that Bob, Sam, and Betty as I called them were really members of the nobility of sporting dogdom, descendants of Queens, Dukes, and Counts. They showed it too in their handsome appearance and eagerness in hunting. I had an object lesson of how puppies were taught to be eager after game. A tenacre field two miles from the kennels was a jumble of the worst possible brambles, but it was alive with both quail and rabbits. Dad had eight tenmonths-old puppies and gave them several hours' exercise a day, chasing small birds. One afternoon all eight were taken over to the bramble field and turned loose.

The quail and rabbits there must have thought the old boy was after them. They came piling out in every direction, the rabbits by the trail, the quail by the overland route. The dogs were wild with excitement, barking and crashing through the brambles; nothing could hold them. Up would go a bunch of quail in the air, frightened out of their small wits. Close under them for an instant, among the rambles, would appear

the head of an excited dog as he jumped high in the air in a vain attempt to catch a victim.

Out would pop three or four cottontail rabbits with a pup in full chase. The cottontails would dart in every direction, the pup would stop, look after the disappearing rabbits, then hear his gay companions carrying on in the bramble bush and turn back to join them. I asked G. Dan the reason for it all. He said, "It makes the dogs eager to hunt after they get a good smell of fresh quail scent." Heavens! they certainly were eager enough, as eager as the broker's wife to speculate in stocks, when she gets all the profits and the husband handles the losses to suit himself.

Betty, the daughter of Count somebody, a most distinguished parent, made a covey point backed by Red, a grandson of Duke somebody or other. Both dogs had desperately long and stylish registered names. Dad sat down remarking, "Go ahead and knock the daylights out of that covey. I'm tired." I walked up slowly, my double sixteen ready. Betty never moved but Red began drawing nearer by inches. As I stepped within ten feet of Betty, a stick snapped under my foot and "Whirr!" the air was full of birds, a full covey of at least fifteen. One drops at the first shot and another crosses my aimed-at bird just as I pull the trigger. Both It was unusual to get three birds with two shots. The rest fly across the fence and light down in an apple orchard. Betty is still pointing. I advance slowly when up springs a single quail. It's easy to shoot single birds. One bird makes but little noise comparatively and there is nothing to detract from the business in hand. There was no hurry. I waited until the quail was twenty-five yards away and fired. Red was a fine retriever. I called Betty in. She lies down at my feet.







Betty pointing a bevy. Red was backing, but was forced forward out of the tall grass in order to get him in the photograph. Red is highly indignant

Prince whirling
into a point on
catching first
scent of a
distant
covey of
quail



Red brings in the four birds one after the other. Then I light a cigarette. In five minutes the rest of the covey will start calling in the apple orchard and Betty, Red, and I will start after them.

Both dogs pointed almost at once after crossing the fence. I put up Red's bird and downed it. At the report of the gun Betty's bird flew and darting behind the trunk of an apple tree got away without my getting a shot. I put up nine birds in the orchard and five of them tried the same dodge. The covey had never been fired at, probably had never heard the noise of a gun before, and yet they were as keen as New England quail to put a tree between themselves and the gun. I was shooting over two of the finest trained bird dogs in America, shot way ahead of my average, and bagged seven quail out of the covey. That was my medal score when shooting alone on any single covey during the trip. We had two bushels of birds that night.

We shot one day over the farm of an old Indian, who in younger days had been a real chief. These Indians received so many acres of land for each member of the family. The old chief had a large family and owned a fine farm of many splendid level acres. He took his cigar and a dollar with evident pleasure. We were shooting over Ted and Box that morning. As I walked down towards a few acres of Kaffir corn I saw a tremendous covey, probably a double covey, running along in the path ahead. I stopped and walked backwards a few yards and called for the dogs. Both were still in the wagon. In an instant they came running down the path and immediately ran into a point.

The birds were well scattered. One of the leading quail, forty yards ahead of the dogs, got up without any great noise of wings and flew towards the small cornfield. I could plainly see five quail squatting in the short grass, a few feet ahead of the dogs, with heads drawn in close to their bodies, looking like small bunches of dead leaves and grass. But when the single forward quail got up, it broke the charm. At least twenty-five small bombshells sprang into being and with fuses sputtering flew after their leader. I made a nice double.

Ted, a young dog, was carried away by enthusiasm. He made two or three steps forward. I had just time to put a pair of cartridges into my gun when a single quail burst upward on noisy wings. It was an easy open shot. With the crack of the gun another quail darted away close along the top of the grass. It was a harder shot than the last, but still nothing to boast about. Some people perhaps don't, but I call that making a double. It was impossible to hold Ted any longer. He rushed too and fro where the hot scent still laid. Finally he pointed; I walked up with gun ready, but it was only one of the dead birds.

I was shooting alone that morning although Dad was in the wagon, and not caring to go very far from the road and wagon I kept on after the big covey. The most of them had alighted in tall grass, on the edge of a good big bramble patch. As soon as they began to move they would run and hide in the brambles. The first gathering call of the covey was the time to start after them.

We went very slowly, Ted, Box, and I; all but the youthful Ted knew why and he was kept at heel. A hundred yards farther and as my finger snapped, Ted came from heel and shoulder to shoulder with Box crept slowly forward into a perfect point. Three birds got up and one fell. They were a little too close for the full choke left barrel. The shots whistling over their heads seemed to terrify the quail on the ground and they laid

like stones. They were sensible birds. There were no straightaway shots. Not much. The quail had evidently studied out the situation and after that, every mother's son—and daughter for that matter—when they did get up would rise, bursting with noise, and fly from left to right behind me. They may be easy for you but these shots are rotten hard for me. Instead of getting a record morning I only bagged one lone bushel and that isn't so very many, twenty birds, considering the shooting I had. The fact is I missed Dad's double gun and his good straight shooting behind it.

When the shooting is good, lunch time comes all too quickly. A little brook on the edge of the meadow, a large flat rock, and we three sat down beside it. I knew Ted and Box thought the lunch unfairly divided. Possibly I did eat more than my share. You can't please everybody, at least I can't. After lunch I noticed two young men sitting on the top rail of the fence on the opposite side of the meadow.

I walked over to speak to them. Just as I left the briar patch and entered the meadow, two jack rabbits jumped in front of me and raced away. I made a double shot on them and both tumbled head over heels. Picking them up I walked over to where the two men were sitting. Getting nearer I saw they were Indians with painted cheeks, feathers in hair and blankets over their shoulders. They were evidently waiting to see me shoot. It might please them to give them the rabbits, so bowing and holding out the rabbits toward them I said with my best Indian accent:

"How? Heap eat."

"Oh, hell!" said one of the Indians, "if I couldn't speak better English than that I wouldn't talk at all."

They were graduates of a celebrated Indian school.

144 "COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

One was a star football player and had studied law. We chatted a little while and the football player began to tell his story. "Yes," he said, "I used to think with education the Indian would be the equal of the white man. It's impossible; they have different natures, they think differently. I saw my mistake and came home. Now I am content among my own."

"This old world," I said, "can offer no higher gift than contentment." His face flashed into a smile, a smile that went straight to your heart. He seized my hand. "I'm glad to hear you say that," he said. "I feared you were going to say something about that damned 'Call of the blood' thing, most all do."

"Tell me," I said, "in a general way, what was the trouble?"

"I always wanted even when a boy," he answered, "to be the equal of the white man. My ambition even then was to climb the ladder that leads to wealth and power."

"You certainly gained an education," I ventured to say.

"Yes, I gained an education but I never reached my goal. I found out the only time an Indian stands on an equal footing with the white man is on the football field. At last I tried to practice law. An Indian hasn't the staying power of the white man. He can't stand failure. He needs praise, a little patting on the back, a little success. Why should I, an Indian chief, fight the petty quarrels and lawsuits of others for money? I left my office at the end of a year without even locking the door and came back to my home in the Territory contented to be an Indian and not play I was a white man."

"You don't favor Indian schools?" I ventured at last to ask.

"Yes, I do," was his answer, "but not too much education. If individuals feel the need of a better education, they can always get it. The average Indian mind can hold reading, writing, and a little arithmetic. They rarely grasp grammar or spelling. I can't spell worth a cent. Of course, a good manual training in some trade always is useful. But an Indian rarely practices any trade after leaving school."

The clouds were very black one night. The morning brought a wild storm, wind, rain, and hail. In the midst of it an Indian on horseback dashed up to the house and told G. Dan the mallards were flying on the Grand River. They often had fine duck shooting there for a few days each fall and spring when the flight was on. The storm was too severe that day but it let up a little at noon the day after and G. Dan and I drove over. There were a lot of ducks on the river, mostly mallards. We shot in different stands, G. Dan and his spaniel on a point projecting into the river where the ducks flying up or down the stream always came near and sometimes crossed. The spaniel would retrieve the ducks that fell in the water.

My stand was in a narrow bay where there was little or no current to carry away the fallen birds as I had no retriever. Attracted by the rapid shooting, a very old Indian came along the bank of the river, carrying an ancient cap-and-ramrod musket and sat down behind some bushes to watch me shoot. He sat so still and was so well hidden that I never would have noticed him if I had not seen him when he first came. Most Indians will not shoot at flying ducks. They only shoot when they have a chance to pot them sitting.

Finally he walked over and sat down a little back of

my stand. He sat motionless for fifteen minutes and then said:

- "Waste heap shot."
- "Yes," I said, "but have heap fun."
- "Um! Me no shoot wing, shoot him on foot, get heap, six, maybe seven, every time, no waste shot."
- G. Dan got twenty-two and I got fourteen that afternoon. I gave four to the old Indian. He never said a word or batted an eye, just took the ducks, turned round, and walked off.

My last day with the quail was as enjoyable as the first one. All of us were shooting that day. We wanted a real bushel of quail for me to carry home and brag about. G. Dan had sold his pump gun and carried his double. We drove several miles beyond the customary limit of the village shooters. It was the greatest quail country out of doors. How quietly all commands were given to the dogs. How marvelously well they behaved, perfect in finding, backing, and retrieving. It was a great pleasure to shoot over them.

The countryside rang with the reports of our guns. We had all the birds needed before noon. A blind man could kill quail in that country. As we were smoking after lunch I said to Dad:

- "Betty seems to know it all. She always does the right thing. Was she hard to train?"
- "I should say not," Dad answered. "She has brains in her head; as soon as she knew what was wanted she almost trained herself."
 - "Couldn't she win in Field Trials?" I asked.
- "Possibly in Members' Stakes, but she hasn't the training for Championship Trials."
 - "Why, Betty seems trained enough to beat the band."
 - "There's different kinds of training," Dad answered.

"One man walks for pleasure, another man trains to see how fast he can run ten miles. Betty has a splendid nose and can hunt all day and every day during the season, but she hasn't enough speed to win in professional competition."

"Why is so much speed necessary in Field Trials and not in actual shooting?" I asked.

"Professional dog trainers are human; if speed makes winners they teach their dogs speed. Some of these speedy animals, though, turn out the finest kind of shooting dogs later on, but there's no fun shooting over them in Field Trial form."

"There's another thing," I said. "Do you remember a good many years ago, the newspapers had a yarn that nobody could eat a quail a day for thirty days?"

"Yes." said Dad, "and there was a so-called thousand-dollar wager made that it could not be done. I saw a picture in a New York paper once of the winner eating his thirtieth quail in a restaurant with a crowd looking on. "

"I'll wager," I said, "that G. Dan can eat five quail a day for thirty days. He's eaten five every day since I have been here."

"You've done pretty well at it yourself," remarked Dad.

"Not so well as G. Dan," I said. "Round steak and pork chops don't hold a candle to quail. I have one for breakfast, a cold quail for lunch. Does a cold quail count?" I asked.

"It's a quail all right, isn't it?" said Dad.

"Yes, I suppose it is. Then I have two quail for dinner every evening, but you know I have a delicate stomach."

"That totes up four quail a day or sixty quail in fifteen days. If your commissary department was in

148 "COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

perfect order how many quail do you reckon you could eat a day?"

I kept a discreet silence; what was the use in arguing with a man like that.

It was time to start on our drive home when Red pointed a covey and Betty backed. The birds made an irregular straggling rise in little bunches from two to five. G. Dan made a double. Dad followed suit. Then it was up to me. Two quail rose together. One fell to the right barrel and as the other dodged around a small bush I fired and he was mine. G. Dan whistled but Dad and I gave three rousing cheers.

G. Dan drove me to the depot. We were just in time to catch the train. I shook hands with G. Dan and said, "I've had a splendid time and must thank you and Dad for all your kindness."

"Fine," said G. Dan.

"I shall look forward to coming again next fall," I cried through the window as the train started.

"Fine," said G. Dan.

SHOOTING THE SALT-WATER COOT

"From out the murmur of the waters,
Voices of friends I used to know,
There once again, seem they to call me
Back to those days of long ago."

-Rhymes of the Stream and Forest.

THE scoter or coot, of which there are several varieties, is a sea duck, a fish eater, one of the toughest and swiftest flyers of the duck family. Coot are found in many other places, but the New England coast is headquarters for shooting them. The northern migration in the spring is usually out of sight of land, but the sportsman comes into his own when the birds return on their southern flight in the fall, as then they fly along the coast close to the shore. The best shooting, as with all wild fowl, is when the wind blows, but the beginner will not find coot shooting easy. The roll and dip of the boat, combined with the wind, makes conditions difficult enough for the most exacting.

Boats go out every day in the season, a few in pleasant weather but more when a windy, cloudy night promises a heavy flight and good shooting in the morning. At sunrise on such days, a dozen boats, a couple of gunshots apart, will form in line, the nearest a half mile from shore, while often a second line of three or four boats will form up several gunshots behind the first line. The shooting on this second line is difficult, as the birds, already alarmed and shot at, are flying fast and high.

There is a lot of fascination in coot shooting and a coot shooter once is a coot shooter always.

We arrived late in the afternoon and a bunch of half a dozen white-winged coot hanging beside the door of the shanty gave a sporting and encouraging look to things.

George was always ambitious and when the alarm clock rattled and banged at four A.M. I let him get up and start the fire. It was impossible though to take another nap as I was nominated and unanimously elected to go out to the well and get a bucket of water. The stars were shining and there was enough and to spare of a penetrating cold east wind.

An hour later we pushed off from the beach. The decoys, some of them wood, the rest topheavy-looking canvas affairs, all painted in coot raiment to the last dot were piled up in the bow, the guns and lunch stowed safely in a dry cuddy in the stern. It was a toughish job rowing against a strong head wind, with the salt spray dashing over us.

Two boats were in line ahead of us; we could hear the men in them talking. Another boat took up the berth alongside while we were setting out our decoys. Each decoy had a long line and an anchor to hold it in place. The wooden decoys settled right down to business, but the big canvas ones dipped and wabbled about like drunken sailors. Then we backed our boat down forty yards to windward and anchored. The anchor rope was fastened to a buoy, all ready to be thrown overboard whenever dead or wounded birds were to be retrieved. It was a cold wait to daylight; meanwhile we matched for first shot at singles and agreed to shoot together at flocks, George to shoot at the leading birds and I the rear ones.

The first coot, a white-wing, came to our decoys just after daybreak, skimming along low down over the water. It was my shot. The bird was just outside the decoys but coming fast, evidently with no intention of stopping. I shot the right and then the left barrel. The duck kept straight on and George fired quickly and downed it.

"What was the matter?" asked George.

"Just nothing," I said, "only a clean miss," and George grinned.

Now I don't want George to know, but I will tell you what caused the miss. My borrowed nine-pound, tengauge gun had a six-pound trigger pull. My own gun, unfortunately at home, has a four-pound trigger pull. This unexpected extra two-pound pull yanked the barrel upward and tells the story of that first shot. It would have been a miracle if I had killed.

At sunrise eleven boats were in line with three more forming a second line three hundred yards back of them. The boat next ours had a single occupant, a small man with a peaked cap. He sat in the stern of his boat holding a remarkably long single-barreled gun. Several times one or two coot came within distant gunshot and he would aim his gun at them but did not shoot. Finally a bunch of eight came within fifty yards; I saw the single barrel go to his shoulder and this time he fired. It was the shot of the day. It rained coot. Six of the eight came down. The long single gun was an eight gauge, loaded with two and a half ounces of number three shot.

Coot with us were few and far between, but finally a pair swerved in to take a look at our decoys. They were pretty wide but we were not passing up any chances. It was George's turn and he knocked down the first one and killed the second before I could get my ten gauge in action. It was a handsome double. Our final shot was at a bunch of five strung out one behind the other. They came over us pretty high up, but we each got one. George killed the leader. I fired at the third in line and the end bird crumpled and came down. As usual my aim was not far enough ahead.

Our position, generally one of the best places for good shooting, was too far out. The wind was too strong. The main flight passed nearer the shore and while several of the boats had very nice shooting, we had but scattering shots. After several hours of watching the more fortunate shooters, we pulled up the anchor, gathered the decoys, and headed for the shanty, followed by several of the farthest offshore boats.

Peaked Cap and his chum, a big blonde giant of a man, who also preferred shooting in a boat by himself, came to the shanty for dinner. They were friends of George; lived twenty miles away and intended to drive home that evening. It was in the good old days of horse travel. George cooked the dinner. We had a Cape Cod fish chowder—the kettle first lined with slices of salt pork, then a layer of fresh codfish, then a layer of potatoes and onions cut up, and these layers repeated until the kettle was nearly full. This had simmered, not boiled, on the stove all the morning. We all did justice to it, but Peaked Cap had four plates full. Then we had a famous coot pie. Who cared if the top crust was a trifle tough and the lower crust a bit soggy? It was coot pie and we were coot shooters.

After dinner Peaked Cap said to George, "You're an old hand at shooting coot, and know their ways pretty well; why is it that there is always a big flight of coot

the day before a storm?" George settled himself comfortably in his chair and lighted his pipe before he answered.

"All ducks seem to know twenty-four hours in advance, when a big storm is coming. My idea is they smell it in the air. You have all probably noticed the peculiar dampness in the air, half an hour before a summer thunderstorm when you say to yourself, 'Holloa, it's going to rain.' Why should not ducks, with their developed sense of smell, predict a storm twenty-four hours in advance, instead of thirty minutes as in our case?" "Why, yes," interrupted the blonde gentleman, "I have noticed, now you speak of it, a dampness or rather a certain softness in the air a little before a summer thunderstorm starts in, but I don't see how that proves that a duck can scent a bad storm twenty-four hours in advance."

"Let me tell you," replied George, "a little experience I had with coot once that I shall never forget. One autumn, some years ago, I came down to the shanty for the early September shooting. As you all know it's a long wait between seasons and I was hungry for a shoot. Unfortunately it was too warm for either comfort or sport. After a few days of miserable luck, I decided, while waiting for a change in the weather, to run down to Plymouth and make a little visit with an old shooting friend.

"The Plymouth shooting is mostly off Gurnet Head. We sailed over there the first afternoon, just to see how things looked. Landing at the lighthouse we walked over to Gurnet Head and sat down on the rocks. Neither of us expected to see a single coot. It was too hot and calm.

"We have great sport here sometimes,' said my

friend. 'The birds fly within a quarter of a mile of the shore when rounding the Gurnet.'

"As I looked I caught a glimpse of flashing wings. They are flying there now, said I pointing to a bunch of a dozen coot that, headed southward, were flying swiftly over the water.

"'Here comes another bunch,' cried my friend.

"It was true. A big flight was on. It was rather late in the afternoon but we watched them pass until sundown. Flock after flock followed each other and all old birds. Thousand of coot went by Gurnet Head that afternoon. It was the biggest flight in my cootshooting experience."

"Well, that seems to me merely a coincidence," remarked the blonde gentleman. "What happened?"

"What happened? Well, at four o'clock the next morning I was awakened by the house trembling in the grasp of an early equinoctial gale. Buckets of rain were dashing against the windows. It was the beginning of a three-days storm."

"You have a good strong argument," said the blonde gentleman, "for your side of the question so far as coot flying before a storm is concerned, but what reason can you have for believing that coot can scent a coming storm twenty-four hours in advance?"

"I look at it in this way," replied George. "The coot that passed Gurnet Head the day before were the first flight from the North. They were old birds that start south as soon as the duties of the breeding season are finished. In pleasant weather they dawdle slowly along the sea line of northern New England, in scattered flocks, just enjoying themselves. The storm was general all along the coast. Each flock in many thousand different places scented the coming storm and,

guided by their instinct of safety, fled south. A single or even a few flocks wouldn't count, but when all the flocks in the danger zone start south at the same time, it certainly goes to prove they know by scent that a bad storm is approaching. That's why there is always a flight of wildfowl the day before a storm."

"Your argument sounds all right," said I, and as all eyes were fixed on me, I thought it must be my turn to say something. "Ducks certainly cannot hear or see a storm coming a day in advance, but I once saw a chap that could smell a coot for about five minutes, better than any coot could scent a coming storm. It's true, too—happened right here and I was only two boats away and saw it all.

"A strange coot shooter from somewhere back in the woods rowed out alone early one morning and secured a good place in the front line. He was a fine shot but made himself unpopular by criticizing the 'lost' birds of fellow shooters in nearby boats. Near the end of the morning's flight, the stranger had a shot at a flock flying almost overhead and killed two. Rising to his feet, he turned round watching to see if another bird, that was hit hard and rapidly dropping behind the rest of the flock, would fall, when one of the dead birds, coming from the clouds, struck him in the back and knocked him to his knees. He got up rubbing his shoulder and I'll bet the laughter that went up along the line did not soothe his feelings any."

The blonde gentleman then spoke up and said, "I am not quite so sure as George seems to be, about coots scenting coming storms, but I do know they scent things up pretty well around the house when being parboiled. I carried home four coot once, to see, as an experiment, if they would taste as good at my own fireside as they

did at the beach. The cook was parboiling them in the kitchen preparing to make a coot pie for dinner. As luck would have it, my wife was at home, and before the cooking progressed very far she came into the kitchen and said to the cook, 'This house smells like a soap factory, what is the matter?' The cook told her and my wife promptly ordered the coot thrown away. Now I had promised the cook two dollars for her trouble if the coot pie was served for dinner and was wondering what would happen. It was a foggy night outside and a little misty that evening in the dining-room, but looking through the mist when I sat down to dinner, I could see a beefsteak on the table. Now I ask you, what would you do under such circumstances?"

"I'm a married man," answered George; "I believe I'd eat the steak."

"Well, that's just what I did," replied the blonde gentleman, "ate the steak and said nothing."

Then Peaked Cap tilted his chair up against the wall and with a preliminary cough announced that though coot meat might be strong and tough, his grandmother could make a coot pie to the queen's taste.

"How does she do it?" said I.

"It's all in knowing how," said Peaked Cap wisely. "First I skin the birds, cutting off the legs and wings. Most of the fat goes with the skin, but I am careful to scrape off any that is left as most of the disagreeable aroma in cooking comes from the fat. Then I cut each coot into six pieces ready for parboiling. My share of the business ends there and grandma takes hold. The first thing she does is to put two quarts of large-sized gravel in a big covered stewpan together with pieces of coot and a large handful of salt, and puts it on the stove to simmer."

"Why does your grandmother put the gravel in the stewpan?" innocently inquired George.

"I'll tell you," said Peaked Cap; "after the coot meat and gravel boil slowly for six hours, she throws away the coot meat and bakes the gravel in the pie."

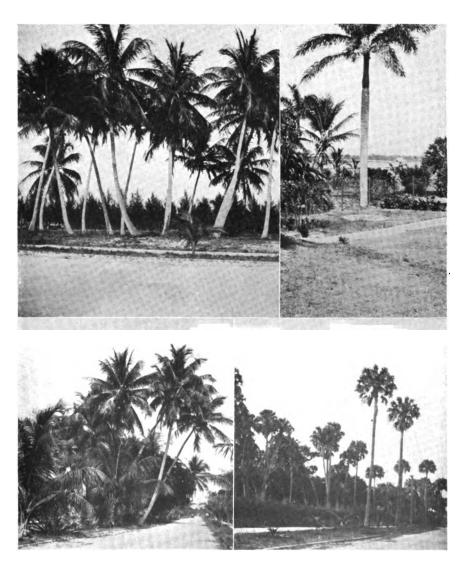
GATHERING BIRDS' EGGS IN FLORIDA

It's quite a change from a New England to a Florida midwinter. It was three weeks before there was even a chance to find any birds' eggs. So the Captain and I pitched camp on the banks of the upper St. John's River. It was a rest, just to lie in the sand and know you didn't have to do anything.

Our tent gleamed white among the live oaks. The St. John's River rippled slowly by, ten feet from our front door. Deer tracks were everywhere. We started several deer at various times when quail hunting, but always in the worst possible tangles of brambles and trees. Unfortunately we had no buckshot or anything larger than number eight shot.

The trees around our camp were alive with semitropical birds of all sizes and colors. Black and white and snow white ibis, with pink bills, were flying about in flocks. These long-legged birds, apparently marsh waders, were clumsily alighting in the tree tops. So many would land sometimes on the same branch that it would slowly bend until the whole bunch, loosing all holds, would go sliding off, only to fly fluttering and screaming to another tree.

Ducks, mostly small divers, water turkeys, and various members of the heron family were feeding close inshore or flying up and down the river. The most interesting of the birds, perhaps, were the flocks of green and yellow Carolina parrakeets, miniature parrots, that



Cocoa palms Cocoa and date palms

Florida's Graceful Palms

Royal palm Cabbage palms

were constantly flying about our camp, screaming and scolding, but lending a real touch of tropical life.

There were fifteen or twenty parrakeets in each flock and often three flocks in sight at once. They were very tame and crowded around our camp, curious to see everything going on and very fond of crumbs of ship biscuit. It was a pleasure to watch them. Half a dozen would light on a small bough. Then one would drop down, hanging by his claws, then reach up and nip the legs of his nearest neighbor with his beak and wake him with a screech out of a seeming doze. Then all hands would hear about the joke and from the noise they made evidently found it most enjoyable.

The Captain shot a parrakeet and it fell, wing broken, finding fault with all the world in loud tones. Immediately several flocks hovered over him, all screaming at the top of their small lungs, evidently asking, "What in the world is the matter now?" It was a beautiful sight to see fifty or more of these little bits of green and gold circling in the sunlight over their wounded comrade.

We had fine fishing in the St. John's, large-mouth black bass, great green and black fellows. We trolled for them, using old-fashioned spoons, silvered outside and painted red inside. The fish were slow taking hold but we finally caught one. I cut a good slice from its belly and fastened it on my hook.

"What's that for?" asked the Captain.

"To attract the fish," I answered; "now watch me catch three to your one."

That was just what happened until the Captain got disgusted and followed my example.

The bass bit smartly and were hauled in by main strength, hand over hand. Even then they made rushes

160 "COME DUCK SHOOTING WITH ME"

from side to side but had little chance to win. They were certainly game. They ran lighter than we expected. Our largest weighed five pounds; the average a pound and a half. Unless badly hooked, we placed them alive in the well, amidships of the rowboat. On landing, we kept the largest in a dam, fashioned on shore, trophies to show on our return to the hotel. But man proposes and fate disposes—the last night of our stay a steamer passed upstream close to shore. Her backwash melted down our mud dam and all our bass escaped. Florida bass are good eating under certain conditions. Get up before sunrise, row your own boat, broil the bass you catch over hot coals, and eat for breakfast.

Our stay on the St. John's River was all too short. Better sport was reported on Indian River. It was decided to try it.

The road to New Smyrna was fine white sand, much of it an inch or two under water, through a pine forest. It took two days to make the trip. The night was passed at the Half-Way House.

Two Florida "crackers," father and son, were waiting there for some freight, a sack of cornmeal and a side of bacon. Seeing we were sportsmen they began talking guns. Both seemed much interested in my new breechloading rifle. The father especially was greatly taken with it. He kept opening and shutting the breech and seemed to hate giving it back to me. Finally he remarked:

"Your gun seems kind of tasty to load, but I'd hate to shoot any gun that opens that-away in the middle. Looks like she might blow up." "What kind of a gun do you shoot?" I asked.

"I shoot a good old flintlock, always have since I was big enough to tote it. My son has danged new-fangled notions. He's young and kind of flighty like and had his flintlock altered over to shoot caps. Dang caps! I say, they're pesky expensive and always getting lost. I like a gun with a flint in it, then she's always ready to shoot without any fuss."

"Do you like your son's gun better than mine?" I asked.

"Well! now, I don't know as I like it better, but his gun is a darned sight safer than yours is. What do you say to trying all three shooting at a mark?"

We placed the mark on a big tree forty yards away. They said they rarely shot at deer over that distance. The flintlock, loaded with ball and three buckshot, went off "fizz-bang," but the old boy's bullet hit the target plumb center, the buckshot in a triangle around it. I shot three or four shots around the top edge.

Then son tried his "new-fangled cap gun" and also made a fine bull's-eye. While father and son only shot once each, both kept encouraging me to continue shooting, rushing to the target after each shot and coming back much excited at the fine work my rifle was doing. I shot a dozen rounds, hitting the bull's-eye regularly towards the last, and then called a halt as supper was ready.

The old boy told a lot of stories after supper, all personal narratives. The Civil War was only four years back and most of the stories were about conscription. He and his son, a man of thirty-five, "laid out," as he called it, for two years to avoid being sent to the war. Once when hiding in the bush, the provost marshal and two soldiers rode by within ten feet of where the old boy

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was hidden and he heard the provost marshal say, "If I could only cotch them two Foutches, I'd put both on 'em in the front line of battle with General Lee. They're danged fine shots." This was the old boy's brag story, it tickled him down to the ground.

Before starting next morning I noticed the tree we used as a target the night before. The crafty natives had dug out every bit of lead. They molded their own bullets and lead was scarce. This was why they kept urging me to keep on shooting. The guileless countrymen had played me "good and plenty" for a lead mine.

We went home with the old boy and shot a week with him, securing several black bears and half a dozen deer. His principal manner of shooting deer was by shining their eyes in the dark. Pitch-pine knots in a fry pan made the blaze, the pan fastened to a pole and carried over the left shoulder. It was a new but barbarous experience in shooting deer and after two evenings of it, we made him give it up and go "still hunting" in the daytime. The latter style of shooting was much pleasanter. The country was perfectly wild, with no neighbor within twenty miles. There were a great many wild turkeys and we shot three of them, but quail were scarce. They told us the wildcats killed off the quail.

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New Smyrna, recently an active port for small blockade runners, was now a tiny silent place, but the sea breeze was most refreshing. It did not take long to hire a light-draft boat and place our stores aboard. Tom, a gentleman of color, was both guide and cook. Tom brought three hounds, that belonged to a New York sportsman, with him. They were a nuisance in the

boat, but when the Captain saw the dogs he laughed and said, "We'll have plenty of venison this trip, if we don't find any birds' eggs."

We sailed south on Mosquito Lagoon until we reached the "Haulover," a narrow canal that led into Indian River. It was just wide enough for our craft to pass. Here I discovered that our supply of tobacco, fish lines, and hooks had been forgotten or left behind.

Stopping at Sands Point we strolled over to the little store.

"What have you in the way of tobacco?" I asked.

"Tobacco? I carry the best in the world," he answered, pointing to some square pound packages of old style "Gamecock."

We took all he had—it was Hobson's choice. There was no other store and no other tobacco. The tobacco we discovered later had one good point, the smoke drove away mosquitoes.

"Where is your stock of fish lines and hooks?" the Captain asked.

"Fish lines and hooks! Well, that's the first time I ever had anyone ask for such things," replied the chap behind the counter. "I've never kept them in stock. It's more trouble for the ordinary everyday local fisherman to get bait, than it is to catch fish. Everyone around here uses cast nets. Don't you need any fine groceries?" he added.

"What grocery supplies have you?" I asked.

"Bacon, cornmeal, and the best coffee you ever drank and only twenty-five cents a pound." We purchased some bacon and cornmeal, but had to go without the fishing tackle.

Our fishing apparatus consisted of a four-pronged fish spear and a leaded cast net. We speared a thirty

or forty pound drumfish every day to boil for dog feed. Except for the sport of it no hooks or fish lines were needed, all the fish a regiment would eat could be had in a couple of hours. The real standby was the cast net, and our victims the universal mullet, the national fish of Florida, just the right size to cook in a fry pan. Tom caught and we ate them by the score, until even now after all these years I am ashamed to look a self-respecting mullet in the face.

One of the pleasantest camps we had on the trip was on the Indian River opposite Cape Canaveral lighthouse, on the main shore side. Making camp was not hard work. The blankets were spread in the sun on the sandy beach to dry. The mosquito nets, with canvas tops to keep off the dew, were put up while Tom started a fire. Then we were at home. Our tent was rarely used, unless Tom thought it was going to rain—but it rained when Tom thought it would, good solid rainstorms they were too, one or two days of streaming wet weather.

There were plenty of quail around our camp and we had great sport with them. "Old Dreary," our most intelligent hound, soon learned to hunt them. He didn't understand at first, but after I shot one and most unfortunately let him eat it he tumbled to the game. At the first scent of quail, he would begin to wag his tail. The nearer he got the faster his tail would wag. When the quail flew you had to shoot and pick the quail up before the dog reached it, otherwise "Old Dreary" ate it. It was a great mistake to let him eat the first quail I shot over him. He evidently thought eating the bird was the best part of the program.

"Old Dreary" got so he wouldn't leave quail for deer when quail hunting, but if he smelled a wildcat, the quail hunt was off for the day. We would usually get a dozen birds in a couple of hours towards evening. We had quail broiled, fried, and roasted. Did you ever try stewed quail with dumplings?

Eagles are perhaps the earliest of the bird family to engage in their annual nesting. We found the first baldheaded American eagles' nest the day before Christmas. The nest was a bunch of big sticks that from the ground looked ten feet across and fifteen feet high. Eagles pair for life and if undisturbed nest in the same place year after year, building a new nest on top of the old one.

Climbing the tall pine that contained the nest was no easy matter and even after reaching the bottom of the nest you were not at the end of your journey. The nest bulged in all directions. It was like trying to get aboard a ship on the stocks, by starting at the keel.

Finally by tunneling through the lower part of the nest, the Captain reached a bough that was one of its chief supports and managed to climb up and reach the top. There were two eggs. The Captain put one in the breast pocket of his shirt, the other in his mouth. Coming down, the egg in his mouth broke! The Captain shot both eagles. The female was thirty-one inches long and six feet eight inches from wing tip to wing tip. The male was twenty-nine inches in length and stretched six feet six inches. On January 18th we found another nest but the eggs had hatched.

It's odd how things happen sometimes. After hunting far and near for an ivory-billed woodpecker's nest I accidentally found one close to camp. Shooting quail

one day I saw an ivory-billed woodpecker fly out of a tree, and was fortunate enough to find the hole and get two eggs. These birds were considerably larger than our common northern flicker, nearly black with some white wing feathers. They had a red and white topknot and a big ivory-colored bill. Not long afterwards I traded off my entire egg collection for a gun that was worth perhaps fifty dollars. Some years ago I was telling a friend, who is quite a "birdologist," of my ivory-billed woodpecker experience and he told me that ivory-billed woodpecker eggs were now worth \$2000 apiece!

The spring brought swarms of mosquitoes and midges. They were a great nuisance. To get rid of them we left the land side and camped over on the outer beach, where a fine sea breeze was nearly always blowing. After getting settled in our new surroundings we decided that some venison would taste nicely and at daylight next morning we started on a deer drive. Tom was to drive and was dressed in his new spring suit for the occasion, -an old pair of trousers cut off at the knees and a flour sack "sweater." a slit for the head and two arm-holes. It was decidedly becoming, but, as the Captain told him, "fine feathers make peacocks." The outer beach was a mile or two wide and all sand, two thirds of it covered with beach grass and scrub bushes, the latter high enough to shelter deer. The deer swam over to the beach to escape flies on the mainland.

Tom was to walk three miles up the ocean beach, turn the hounds into the scrub, then whoop things up generally. Half an hour after Tom started, the Captain and I took our stands among the bushes. I sat with my back against a bunch of scrub. In front was a wind-swept opening, perhaps fifty yards wide, of clean, white sand that not even a mouse could have crossed without

being seen. Suddenly the hounds opened together with a wild chorus of noise.

"Confound it all," I thought, "that big racket means they have scented a cat. All we'll get to-day will be scratched-up hounds and no venison to eat."

Wildcats are clever. They don't lie still and jump like a deer in front of the dogs and trust to speed for safety. At the first sign of danger, when there are no large trees to climb, a cat is up and away. This one probably had departed from its night's bed long before the hounds scented him and knew perfectly well that only luck and his own legs would save him. The cat by now would be a mile ahead of the hounds, possibly more, and liable to come in sight at any moment.

I was idly scanning the line of scrub bushes in front of me when, without the slightest sound, a wildcat came into the open. It was a picture of grace as it stopped to listen, with one foot raised and head turned backward in the direction of the dogs. The dry sand had failed to carry the scent and all was still. Suddenly something, some warning or sound of danger, came down wind and the cat came bounding over the sand straight towards me. I hated to shoot, so rising to my knees I clapped my hands together and gave the old maids' war-whoop—"scat." The effect was magical—a cloud of sand and a streak of wildcat shot off at a tangent straight for the Captain's stand. Then came a shot, a shout, and I knew it was the funeral oration.

The month of April was well under way; the winter was over and the bow of our boat was pointed northward. The shore birds in tens of thousands were coming in fast from somewhere farther south on their northern migration. The boat, sailing close to the beach, would scare the birds up fifty yards ahead and they

would turn and sweep behind us, alighting at the old stand as soon as we had passed. There were curlews, godwits, willets, beetle-heads, turnstones, a very few winter yellowlegs, with sanderlings and peeps in unimaginable flocks. With decoys and a blind, a single shooter could fill a wagon with them in a few hours. But what was the use? We could do nothing with them. The Captain said that no one ever shot these "blooming little dicky birds," but I confess I wanted to.

More than once I was tempted to seize my "sixteen" and take up the challenge that some wily old beetle-head plover was sending over his shoulder, as he circled a hundred yards away. Perhaps they were old acquaintances, possibly they were some of the same jaunty rascals that had fought shy of my decoys in past seasons on the sand beaches of Cape Cod. I didn't shoot, but I whistled the plover call until the beetle-heads present held a convention to consider who the wayward brother might be who was making all the racket.

It was a beautiful morning. We were homeward bound. The Captain was asleep in the shade of the sail. Tom sat in the bow, dangling his feet in the water, softly singing to himself,

"De whale am de eatenest fish in de sea, He swallered down Jonah and he'd swaller down me, De whale ain't much good dat I can see 'Cept swaller down Jonah, den swaller down me,'

but ready instantly to push off if our craft touched on any one of the numerous sandbars. The tiny waves rippled in the sunlight. A few score white herring gulls were hovering over and diving into a school of small fish, intent on getting breakfast. The surf boomed

GATHERING BIRDS' EGGS IN FLORIDA 169

faintly on the outer beach. A long line of pelicans were flying towards the sea, while in the south, the beach and wooded main shore lines came together in one softened outline of tall pines far behind us.

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